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SIR THOMAS MORE:

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A TRAGEDY.

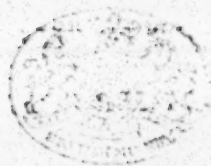
BY

THE AUTHOR OF THE VILLAGE CURATE,
AND OTHER POEMS.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCXCII.



1

25

TO
WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.

(AUTHOR OF THE TASK, AND TRANSLATOR OF HOMER,)

AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT

FOR HIS VIRTUES AND HIS ABILITIES,

AND AS A COMPLIMENT DUE

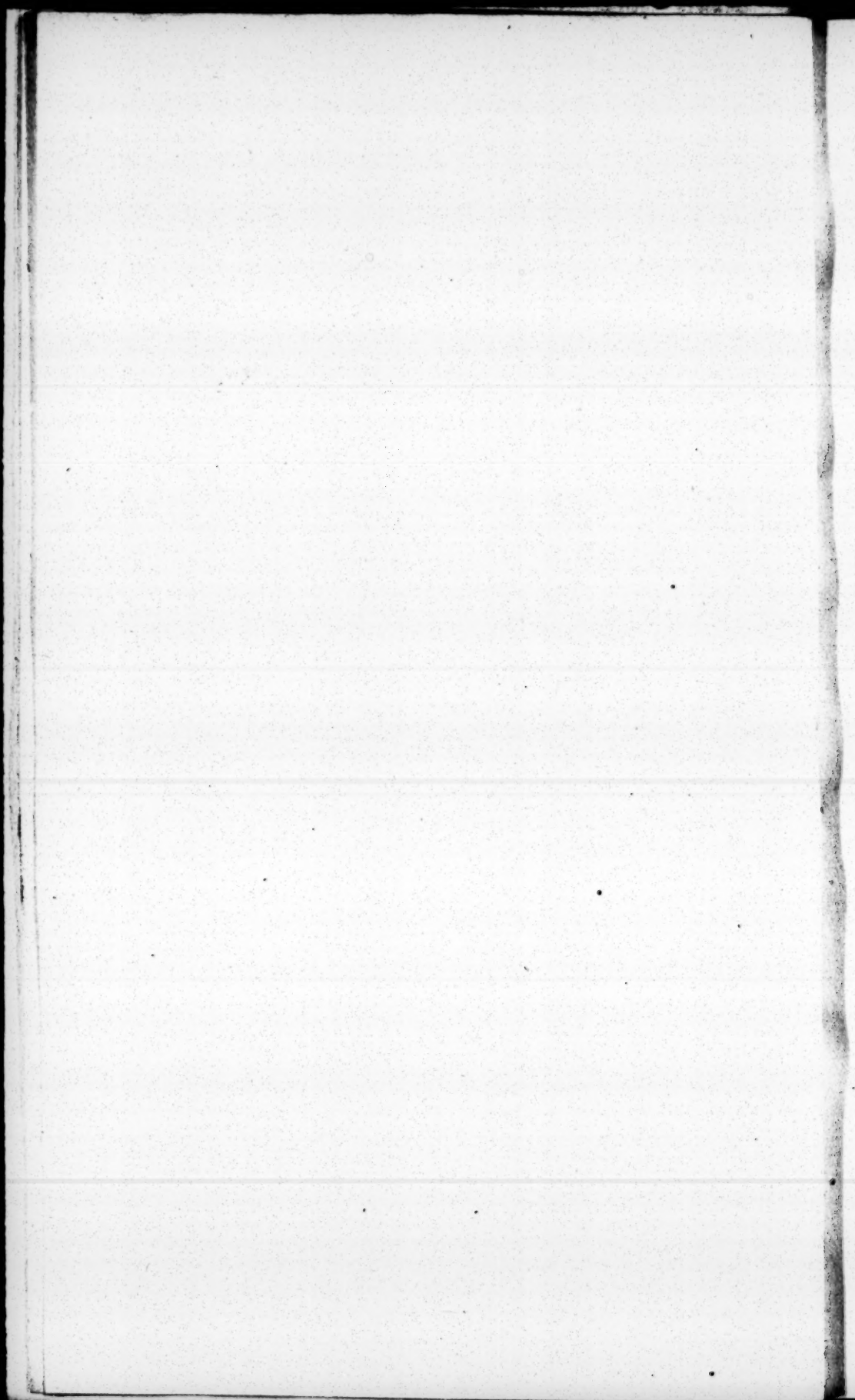
TO THE LIBERALITY, CANDOUR, AND HUMANITY

OF HIS CRITICISM,

THE FOLLOWING PIECE IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY ITS AUTHOR.

25



CHARACTERS.

HENRY VIII.

SIR JOHN MORE, FATHER TO SIR THOMAS.

TUNSTAL, BISHOP OF DURHAM.

DUKE of NORFOLK.

BONVISE.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

ROPER.

DANCY.

HERON.

LADY MORE.

MARGARET.

ELIZA.

CECILIA.

ANNE BULLEN.

SIR THOMAS MORE:

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE—*The Thames.*

Enter BONVISE and HERON.

BONVISE.

HERÉ we take water, but must wait awhile,
The boatman is not come.

HERON.

A lucky pause.

Let us resume the story we had dropp'd,
And More be all the subject of discourse.

BONVISE.

Ay More alone, with now and then a glance
Toward his youngest daughter—her I mean

A 3

Whose

Whose sprightly wit has almost won the heart
 Of a young Oxford scholar, just return'd
 From schools and tutors with his first degree,
 To steal a smile from sweet Cecilia's brow
 And dine with Bonvise.

HERON.

Meaning me, I think.

BONVISE.

Yes Sir, and much commending your discernment.

HERON.

Why, to be honest, in my secret heart
 I long have lock'd a more than due regard
 To sweet Cecilia.

BONVISE.

Sir, not more than due.

Were it unbounded, it were all deserved.
 There is in that sweet maid such easy mirth,
 Such sensible good-humour, such an eye,
 For ever laughing, and a heart so good,
 That could I from these shoulders, with a wish,
 Shake off some thirty years, I should become
 Once more a wooer, and to win her love,
 Be my friend Heron's rival. But since Time
 Is such a sharp and cautious creditor,
 He steals a grace for ev'ry year he gives,
 I must have other thoughts, and leave the task
 Of siege and conquest to the nerves of youth.
 Pursue her then. If Bonvise can assist
 And help you to her love, command my service.

A TRAGEDY.

7

HERON.

I thank you Sir; but we have far digress'd.
More was the theme.

BONVISE.

I knew him from a child,
A merry, generous, and active boy,
Court'd by all his mates, and made the judge
Of ev'ry difference. I knew him too,
When, by the int'rest of his worthy father,
He was appointed to a place of trust,
Under the eye and in the house itself
Of Card'nal Morton. Highly pleas'd was he
With his new office, and as pleas'd with him
The gracious Card'nal. Often would he say,
Who liv'd to see it, More would one day shine
The ornament and honour of his country.
And so he lov'd him for his ready parts,
That shortly after, from his private purse,
He enter'd him at Oxford.

HERON.

I have drunk
Many a glass upon that very floor
Where More imbib'd his learning.

BONVISE.

He who drank
One glass of wine within his chamber door,
Drank more than he did all the years he dwelt there.
For he was ever sparing, and so strict
In his refusal of the grape's pure blood,

A 4

That

That he was styl'd the sober Rechabite
 And wine-abhorring muffulman. He ate
 Not much, and car'd not what. And so intent
 Was his whole mind upon the books he read,
 That he was always plain, and little art
 Appear'd without to grace the man within.
 Harris his servant bought him all he wore,
 His total suit, and he approv'd in all
 What colour and what fashion Harris pleas'd.

HERON.

You make me smile—but do not pause—proceed.

BONVISE.

I hasten to the time, when, terms expir'd,
 He laid aside the boy, and 'gan perform
 The able barrister, and worthy man.
 Soon as he rose fame took him by the hand,
 And trumpeted his praise, that all might hear
 In ev'ry nook of this sea-compass'd isle.
 So on he went, mounted from step to step,
 And gather'd greatness like a ball of snow
 Roll'd from the mountains. He was wise and just,
 Ready and eloquent. He spared no pains
 To win his cause, and if the cause was good,
 Upheld it like a lion. For the fee
 He little car'd, and where the man was poor
 Labour'd for nothing. To relieve distress,
 And humble arrogance, was all his wish;
 Not to grow rich upon the spoils of both.

HERON.

A TRAGEDY.

9

HERON.

A noble disposition.

BONVISE.

'Twas for this ;

All who had suits pursued him. To his house
 Resorted great and little, rich and poor.
 The city chose him for their sheriff's court,
 The still-yard merchants made him twice their agent,
 And he was all-victorious. Hence it was
 Wealth flow'd into his coffers, like the tide
 Push'd by the wind into the mouth of Thames.
 He was return'd to serve in parliament,
 And shortly after that usurious king,
 Our late exacting sovereign, made demand
 Of a large subsidy and three fifteenths,
 To dow'r his daughter to the king of Scots.
 The fullen commons wish'd to shun the grant,
 But hardly dar'd ; and they had surely pass'd
 An act to yield it, but that More arose
 And dealt about such manly argument
 As rous'd them to withstand the king's request,
 And grant him nothing. When the house dispers'd,
 'Twas told his majesty, a beardless boy
 Had thwarted all his purpose. In great wrath
 He vow'd revenge, and to the Tower sent,
 For some fictitious fault, the good old judge,
 His innocent father.

HERON.

With his hoary locks

The

The mild Sir John, who at his son's still lives,
 And, circled by his beauteous progeny,
 Towards his exit like the ev'ning sun
 Sinks smiling.

BONVISE.

Yes, that venerable man.

And tho' no crime was ever urg'd against him,
 He gave him not release till he had rais'd
 A heavy fine upon him. Griev'd at heart
 Was More, to see the old and waspish king
 Pillage the father for the son's offence;
 And well he knew, soon as occasion serv'd,
 His harpy talons would be fix'd on him.
 So to the continent he purpos'd flight.
 But, ere his steed was ready, news arriv'd
 The king was dead and all the land at rest.
 He was not sorry to be so reliev'd,
 And once more with his wife and little ones
 Sat down in peace.

HERON.

What did the present king.

BONVISE.

The fame of More soon reach'd him, and he sent
 Cardinal Wolsey, then an humble priest,
 To give him invitation to his court.
 He modestly excus'd his want of parts,
 And hop'd his majesty would seek advice
 From those that more deserv'd. The king forbore
 To urge him farther; so he liv'd retir'd,

Tho'

A TRAGEDY.

11

Tho' warm in his profession, and his hours
Fill'd all with labour of the pen and head.

HERON.

Then came the weighty cause which call'd him forth
To public service.

BONVISE.

Yes, the forfeiture
Of the pope's ship, for which he was retain'd
To plead in the star-chamber, and so shone
Before the chancellor and all the bench,
That the king press'd him for his eloquence,
And made him of his council 'gainst his will.
But this you know, and my tale, too minute,
Vexes your ear.

HERON.

Not so. I hear with pleasure
What follow'd as Sir Thomas rose at court?

BONVISE.

For many years he was so much belov'd,
Both by the king and his unhappy queen
From whom he now solicits a divorce,
That they detain'd him days and weeks; yea months,
To feed upon the music of his tongue.
And when with difficulty he obtain'd
Leave to be gone, to kiss his little ones,
And spend an interval of speedy love
With the deserving partner of his cares,
The king would often to his house repair,
Where he now lives, upon the river's brink,

At

At Chelsea—walk into his garden—talk
 Of learning, politics and news of state—
 Lean on his shoulder in familiar chat—
 And sometimes at his table, poorly spread,
 Dine uninvited.

HERON.

I have heard as much.

BONVISE.

Then was he chosen speaker to the commons,
 And shortly after the bold Cardinal
 Came to the house with a few other lords,
 Preceded by his polaxes and cross,
 His pillars, maces, his great seal and hat,
 To countenance a bill depending then,
 And little relish'd, to allow the king
 Upon demand, an ample subsidy.
 He came, and out of season made a speech,
 To tell the commons what the monarch ask'd
 'Twas theirs, as duteous subjects, to bestow.
 But this was doctrine that no ear approv'd.
 So when he finish'd, and with threat'ning eye
 Look'd round for their consent, seeming to say,
 'Deny me if you dare,' the house was still,
 And not a single member op'd his lips.
 Stung with vexation he could ill conceal,
 He call'd on one, another, and a third,
 To make reply or second his demand.
 But none obey'd him, for 'twas predetermin'd
 The house would answer by their speaker More.

The

A TRAGEDY.

13

The speaker rose, and in an able speech
Excus'd their silence ; said, the house abash'd
At sight of one so learned and so wise,
So great and noble, deigning to appear
Within their doors, could not collect their pow'rs
To make him due reply. Then with warm words,
That made his heart's blood mount into his face,
Bold but respectful, pointed but polite,
He told him that his coming to that house
Was inexpedient, contrary to form,
And not agreeable to ancient right.
Then Wolfey rose, and with his face on fire
Departed muttering.

HERON.

Hence sprang it seems
That jealousy his looks so oft betray
Toward Sir Thomas.

BONVISE,

From this very cause.
For in his heart he hid a world of spite,
And has attempted oft to ruin More
In the kings estimation, but in vain.
The king still loves him—may he love him long.
He was his orator on Ardres plain,
At Cambridge and at Oxford. Here I pause.
For why should I relate what all must know,
That More and Tunstal are but now return'd
From treating at Cambray, and bring us home
The welcome olive and long-wish'd-for peace.

I hear

I hear the king is above measure pleas'd
 At the good terms on which we sheathe the sword.
 If so, the Cardinal may strive in vain,
 More will not fall thro' him.

HERON.

When comes he home?

BONVISE.

I met Cecilia in my morning's walk.
 She shew'd me then a letter, where he said,
 If nothing hindered he should sleep to night
 In his own house at Chelsea. Lo! the boat.
 Come and I'll shew you all the wealth he owns.
 Blooming Eliza shall delight your ear
 With her soft flowing song, and you shall see
 The humble Margaret, her father's pride,
 The pattern of a mother gone to heaven.
 But look and love not, for the maid is won,
 And wedded. Happy Roper! Neither hope
 Charming Eliza shall be ever thine.
 Her heart is Dancy's, and his heart is her's.
 Cecilia yet loves none, reserv'd perhaps
 For my friend Heron. And believe me, Sir,
 Heron is surely happy if he wins her.
 Nature has made them all to be admir'd,
 To be belov'd. And each subduing grace
 Which nature gave the Father has improv'd,
 Gently conducting their obedient minds
 Into the paths of virtue, truth, and knowledge.
 Come let's away, we make the boat-man wait.

Exeunt.

SCENE

SCENE *changes to* SIR THOMAS MORE'S LIBRARY.

MARGARET *is discovered reading*, ELIZA *at work*,
CECILIA *looking on*.

CECILIA.

Better and better. Sure we shall at last
Paint nature as she is. That rosebud there
Tempt me to smell to it. That snow-drop smiles
Like Christmas bounty—and that jasmine sprig
I long to pluck it—with the bunch of pinks
'T would make a nosegay worthy of the queen.
Indeed Eliza we shall soon excel.
Practice has won us half the painter's art.
I think within a day or two at most,
To paint my father's picture with my needle
As well as Holbein with his brush and pallet.
Heav'ns how you frown ! Since Dancy left the room
I have not seen one smile upon your cheek,
Nor heard one syllable escape your lips.
Be not so grave and serious. One would think
There was as much devotion in your work
As Marg'rets book, and half her page, I'll swear,
Is not observed. Her thoughts are all abroad
Dancing attendance at her husband's heels.
Pray what's the subject Marg'ret. See she's dead.
She's fast asleep and all her dream is Roper.
Well, if you will be grave, I'll walk alone,
And get a sweet-heart to be dull as you.
Dear Ladies, fare ye well. How strong is love

To

To bind in fetters e'en a woman's tongue !
 I wish my father may come home to night.
 So, so, my Lady Alice, are you there ?
 Ladies, I leave you to your step-mamma. *(Exit.)*

Enter LADY MORE.

LADY MORE.

What, reading still my daughters, still at work ?
 So much confinement will impair your health.
 I was all action when as young as you.
 What will your father think, if he returns
 And finds us all so idle, and our house
 So ill prepar'd. Come, lay aside your book,
 And meet me in the hall without delay. *(Exit.)*

ELIZA, *rising*.

O my dear Marg'ret, how tormenting 'tis
 Thus to forsake the happy thoughts we feed,
 And wander by compulsion. All your mind
 Has been employ'd on Roper and my father,
 All mine——

MARGARET.

On Dancy.

ELIZA.

Yes, and I desire,
 Ere we are sunder'd, and my father comes,
 To ask you one short question.

MARGARET.

Let me hear it,

ELIZA.

Answer me truly, and if ought be done

That

A TRAGEDY.

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That needs correction, let thy gentle tongue
Spare not to censure me.

MARGARET.

Why fears thy heart?

Disburthen all thy soul. Its secret hopes
Shall be as safely lock'd in Marg'ret's breast
As Marg'rets once in thine. We were as twins
E'en from the cradle, and Eliza's tongue
Never till now was backward to reveal
The secret passion of her longing heart
To my attentive ear.

ELIZA.

Nor will she now,
Tho' willing to conceal what all perceive,
Her love for Dancy. Will my father, think you,
Will he approve?

MARGARET.

Thy love for Dancy? Yes.

There is in Dancy such a lib'ral mind,
Such knowledge and such virtue, such regard
To outward decency and inward worth,
How can he but approve? I've heard him speak
In terms of extacy of that good youth,
And tell our brother John to copy him.
There is but one thing can prevent thy wish.
He is a younger son, and fortune's hand
Bestow'd no ample means upon his father.

ELIZA.

Ay, there's my fear. The want of wealth alone

B

May

May prove a barrier to Eliza's love,
And make her ask in vain her father's leave.
Ah! she will not obtain it.

MARGARET.

Be not sad.

Ask it at least. Our father is most kind,
And often has remov'd the thing we fear'd,
To help us to our wish. So will he now.

ELIZA.

I wish 'twere possible. But, such a rock
Is want of money, in the way of love,
I fear to ask it. It would grieve his heart
Not to remove the obstacle we dread.

MARGARET.

Then let me ask it; for my own success
Was due to intercession made by thee,
When I was lov'd as thou art. I will ask,
And may my prayer earn the meed we wish.

ELIZA.

Thanks, my dear friend. I ow'd you much before.
Do this, and I shall owe you all. Succeed,
And how shall I requite you?

MARGARET.

Say no more.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE

A TRAGEDY.

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SCENE *changes to* SIR THOMAS MORE'S GARDEN.

SIR JOHN MORE *is discovered sitting on a Garden-seat. To him enters* CECILIA.

SIR JOHN.

Who's there? Cecilia?

CECILIA.

Yes, Sir.

SIR JOHN.

Where's your tongue?

It is not us'd to make such short replies.

CECILIA.

No, Sir, but I am busy.

SIR JOHN.

What d'ye look at?

CECILIA.

A little animal, that round my glove,
And up and down to ev'ry finger's tip,
Has travell'd merrily, and travels still,
Tho' it has wings to fly. What its name is
With learned men I know not. Simple folks
Call it the Lady-bird.

SIR JOHN.

Poor harmless thing,

Save it.

CECILIA.

I would not hurt it for the world.
Its prettiness says, spare me, and it bears
Armour so beautiful upon its back,

B 2

I could

I could not injure it to be a queen.
 Look, Sir, its coat is scarlet dropp'd with jet,
 Its eyes pure ivory.

SIR JOHN.

Child, I am blind
 To objects so minute. I know it well.
 'Tis the companion of the waning year,
 And lives among the blossoms of the hop.
 It has fine filken wings enfolded close
 Under that coat of mail.

CECILIA.

I see them, Sir,
 For it unfurls them now. 'Tis up and gone.
 But here, Sir, in my left hand I have lock'd
 A pris'ner still more beauteous. 'Tis a moth.
 I found it on a rose-leaf. It has wings
 Dappled with grey and jet, and underneath
 Sleeps in a suit of scarlet. No, it wakes.
 I feel it move. 'Tis eager to be gone.
 Shall I dismiss it?

SIR JOHN.

By all means.

CECILIA.

'Tis gone,
 And has left half the beauties of its wing
 In dust upon my glove.

SIR JOHN.

Ay, beauty's wreck
 Is soon accomplish'd. Of created things

Nothing

Nothing was finish'd with a tool so nice
 As the moth's wing. 'Tis cover'd with fine art.
 'Tis cloath'd in feathers to the quickest eye
 Hardly perceptible. Yet one flight touch
 Defaces all. So woman's beauty flies,
 Brush'd by the hand of sorrow or mischance.
 Escapes it these? Age will not let it pass.
 It falls a victim to the thefts of time;
 And there is nothing permanent on earth
 But goodness. I have liv'd, Cecilia, long.
 'Tis almost ten years since I saw fourscore.
 Experience tells me beauty is a shade,
 And all the pride of youth a morning cloud.
 Will you be taught to be for ever fair,
 Spite of old age and wrinkles? then be good.

CECILIA.

Dear Sir, I will, if you'll instruct me how.
 For nature made me with a sloven's hand,
 And sent me to the world so ill-endowed
 The eye of man o'erlooks me. None I win,
 Because I want Eliza's lively bloom
 And Marg'ret's modesty. Will goodness, Sir,
 Atone the loss of these?

SIR JOHN.

Ay, three times these.

CECILIA.

Then, Sir, if I live longest, leave me your's.

SIR JOHN.

Thou wilt not want it, were it more than 'tis.
 Besides our virtues are not our's to give.

Estates and chattels may from fire to son
 Descend by will, but goodness none inherits.
 'Tis the peculiar beauty of the soul
 And with it flies to heav'n. It must be won,
 Or never worn. Thy own industrious hand
 Must earn it with much labour. 'Tis the meed
 And golden wages of habitual merit,
 Which rises early to an endless task,
 And leaves it late at night.

CECILIA.

What task, dear Sir,
 Tell me, and I'll begin it.

SIR JOHN.

'Tis begun.
 Do as thy father bids thee, 'twill proceed.

CECILIA.

I wish he was at home. Sir, will you walk,
 And look out for him at the garden gate?
 I think he'll come by water.

SIR JOHN.

Go before.
 I'll follow after with what speed I can.

CECILIA.

No, Sir, we'll go together. Here's your staff.
 The other hand shall rest upon my arm. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE *changes to a rural Prospect.* Enter LADY
 MORE, MARGARET, and ELIZA.

LADY MORE.

Where did you leave Cecilia?

A TRAGEDY.

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MARGARET.

She left us;
And may no doubt be in the garden found
Conversing with Sir John. She loves to talk,
And he her ready judgment loves to hear.

LADY MORE.

Well, stay awhile, and there we will go seek her.
I must a moment leave you. *(Exit.)*

ELIZA.

Many thanks
I owe thee Margaret, for thy kind concern
And friendly consolation.

MARGARET.

Name it not.
Some one approaches. Is not this the road
Most usual with our father?

ELIZA.

So I think,
And, if my eyes are good, I see him now.

MARGARET.

Surely 'tis he—let's meet him—yes, 'tis he.
Lo! he has spied us, and dismounts to meet us.

*(They go out and return again immediately
with SIR THOMAS.)*

SIR THOMAS.

What! still together? Ere I went from home
I gave this hand to Roper, yet it hangs
Still on its old support, Eliza's arm.
How does my Marg'ret? Child, thy fruitful eye

B 4

Wept

Wept much at my departure ; weeps it now ?
 Sorrow alone should with the Naiads dwell,
 Joy should be far away. I need not ask
 If health be thine Eliza, for thy cheek
 Speaks warm assurance that no latent ill
 Lurks in the life within. The plenteous shower
 'That water'd these gay roses as I went
 Has made them fresh as morning, sweet as May.
 And yet methinks, the remnant of a cloud
 Hangs on thy brow, and that reluctant smile
 Is summer scarce return'd, an April fun
 That shines in tears, and in a moment fades.
 Cecilia's well ? your brother, and Sir John ?

ELIZA.

All well, Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

And my Lady Alice well ?
 And Roper ? all my house, and all my friends ?

MARGARET.

All well, Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

Why then let's be merry, girls,
 For all the land rejoices. Where's my Lady ?
 And where Sir John, Cecilia, and my son ?

MARGARET.

Your son and Mr. Roper are from home.
 Sir John is with Cecilia in the garden.
 My Lady Alice is this moment gone
 Into the house before us.

SIR

A TRAGEDY.

25

SIR THOMAS.

Softly then.

We'll first salute my lady by the way,
Then steal a silent entrance to the garden. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE changes to the Garden Gate looking out upon the
Thames. CECILIA and SIR JOHN standing in ex-
pectation.

CECILIA.

Indeed I think he's coming, Sir. The boat
Is with her head this way. The boatman too
Seems to row faster at the sight of us.
Can you not hear his oars?

SIR JOHN.

But there are two.

Who should the second be?

CECILIA.

Harris perhaps.

(*Enter SIR THOMAS, LADY MORE, MAR-
GARET, and ELIZA unperceived.*)

I'm certain 'tis my father. See his hand,
He waves it to us. Sir, I know 'tis he.

SIR THOMAS.

Your spectacles deceive you, Madam.

CECILIA.

Ah!

A ghost! Look, Sir, my father.

SIR JOHN.

'Tis indeed.

SIR

SIR THOMAS.

It is good, Sir, and it delights me much
 To find you able still. Cecilia's eyes
 As yet less quick than yours. She doubts me still.
 An honest kiss may serve to undeceive her.
 Now tell me, Madam, am I but a ghost,
 Or flesh and blood, as thou art.

CECILIA.

Flesh and blood

I think Sir, and you're truly welcome home.

SIR JOHN.

Yes, she has daily pray'd for your return,
 And greets it heartily as well as I,
 Glad to receive you ever, never more
 Than when the blessed messenger of peace.

SIR THOMAS.

In truth, good sir, I feel it is an office
 An angel might be proud of. What a show'r
 Of hearty welcomes has pursued my steps
 E'en to my door at Chelsea! Ever thus
 Smile peace upon us, and the weary sword
 Rust in the scabbard.

SIR JOHN.

I rejoice to hear

Your female counsellors were both for peace.

SIR THOMAS.

The French King's mother and the Emp'rors aunt
 Our sister plenipo's? yes, both for peace,
 And 'twas a message that gave second youth

To

To their time-faded cheeks. A woman's tongue
 Sings sweetly, when the burden of her song
 Is lovely peace. The angry sounds of war
 Denounc'd by her, deprive her of all grace.
 Her weapon is the curtsy of obedience.
 She conquers like the Parthian by retreat,
 Wounds as she flies, and as she yields subdues.
 Ha! who comes here?

CECILIA.

'Tis Mr. Bonvise, Sir,
 The person we mistook for you I think,
 And with him Mr. Heron.

SIR THOMAS.

Welcome Sir.

Enter BONVISE and HERON.

BONVISE.

Sir Thomas welcome—welcome to your own
 And welcome to your country. To myself
 Welcome as plenty with a crowded lap
 Diffusing general good. I owe to you,
 That my adventures once more plough the deep
 Without a foe in man. The lurking rock
 The fatal quicksand war, at your command
 No more annoys me, but my prosp'rous sails
 Brave the wild ocean in what course they please.

SIR THOMAS.

Let me have room to thank you, worthy Sir,
 And welcome this your friend.

BON-

BONVISE.

Young Mr. Heron.

Had my overflowing heart been loaded less
 With thanks for my own welfare, I had said
 Much in his commendation. Sir he's young
 But graces youth with merit.

HERON.

Spare me Sir ;
 Much recommending injures the good name,
 And he who seems an angel in report
 Is often found deficient in the trial.

SIR THOMAS.

Modest at least, good Sir ; and modesty
 Makes us applaud the moon with borrow'd beams,
 While from the real glories of the sun,
 Proudly display'd, we turn our eyes away.

HERON.

If, Sir, to wish that excellence we want,
 Be to deserve a little, then that little
 In its full measure is the worth I own.

SIR THOMAS.

Modest again.—

LADY MORE.

Sir Thomas, by your leave,
 You make your worthy father stand too long.

SIR THOMAS.

I think so, Lady More ; therefore proceed
 And shew the way to chairs.

(Exeunt all but SIR THOMAS and BONVISE.)

SIR

A TRAGEDY.

29

SIR THOMAS.

A pleasant youth.

I like him much, for his ingenious mind
Is like a beauty veil'd, that hides her face,
Not like the gen'ral world to be thought fair,
But that she deems it plain, and ill perceives
Her own perfection. Did you mark Cecilia?
Methought her eye shew'd singular regard
To our young friend. If he approves her tongue
As much as she his person, I may vouch
They'll soon approach me with the lover's prayer
Sigh'd from an aching bosom, *Sir your leave.*
I am not certain I should disapprove.

BONVISE.

Sir Thomas, to be bold, his heart's desire
Is to obtain her; and my sedulous eye
Was much delighted at the gracious looks
Cecilia gave him. When he saw her first,
There was in her discourse a cheerful power
That won his ear, and with his ear his heart.
He own'd he lov'd. And should he chance to win
The honest heart of your most worthy daughter,
I dare affirm his father will be pleas'd,
And crown th' abundant honour he pursues
With hearty approbation. And perhaps,
When I have told you how that youth deserves,
And what he may expect hereafter—

SIR THOMAS.

Stay.

I do not wish to fix my daughter's price
 At more than maintenance. All else I ask
 Is the good heart and cultivated mind.
 Young men who these possess, shall have approach,
 And all success their virtues can obtain them.
 Be it still provided, merit what they will,
 They win my daughters with their own consent,
 Free from all bias. Therefore seal thy lips,
 And never let this secret thence escape,
 That I approve of Heron. Her good heart
 Is pliant and complying, and 'twould yield,
 Spite of her judgment, to her father's wish.
 In choice of husbands they shall please themselves.

Enter ROPER and DANCY.

Son Roper, I rejoice to see your looks,
 And your's friend Dancy, of a hue so healthy.
 Learning and solitude have seldom brows
 That look so fresh.

ROPER.

Except at Chelsea, Sir,
 Under your mild protection. Study here
 Impairs not beauty. Nature has her friend,
 As well as wit and knowledge. Hand in hand
 Dance the sweet graces of the polish'd mind
 And healthy constitution.

SIR THOMAS.

Sir, no more.
 I know you'll ring us changes in that key
 Till we forget our supper. Lead the way. (*Exeunt.*)

ACT.

A C T. II.

SCENE—the Banks of the Thames.

Enter CECILIA.

NOBODY up yet? I have walk'd an hour,
And not a soul has met me, tho' the sun
Had left his bed before I quitted mine.
I thought young Heron would be sure to rise.
I told him I should walk. Well, let him sleep.
He loves not me, but I love him—a little. (*Exit.*)

Enter SIR THOMAS and BONVISE.

SIR THOMAS.

Now let me ask you, while occasion smiles,
What hear you of the king's divorce?

BONVISE.

Not much.

The pope still hesitates. The card'nal halts,
And with his friend Campeggio, dreams and sleeps
Cold as a statue. Our impatient king,
'Tis said, is angry at their long delay,
And vows, if things are not determined soon,
He will be judge himself. He made a tour
Some weeks ago, low-spirited forfooth,
And said he did it to disperse the clouds
Of care and melancholy. He return'd

Much

Much benefited by the country air,
 But more by a physician of the church,
 One Doctor Cranmer, by whose shrewd advice
 He trusts his conscience will be soon at ease,
 And his divorce effected. The sage priest
 Counsels an application to be made
 To all the universities in Europe,
 Whether the former dispensation of Pope Julius
 Be valid, or invalid. If the first,
 'Why then, says he, your majesty's own mind
 'May rest contented that your present queen
 'Is lawfully your wife. But if the last,
 'The pope will be constrain'd to grant your suit,
 'Or pass a sentence which shall seem t' oppose
 'The joint opinions of all Christendom.'
 But why should I relate a thing you know,
 Just come from Hampton Court.

SIR THOMAS.

I knew it not.

The king said nothing, and my scrupulous mind
 So little relishes the queen's divorce,
 I held my peace, and shun'd it as a theme
 Not to be mention'd. Ere I went abroad
 He came himself in person to my house,
 Told me his scruples, laid the Bible open,
 And shew'd me where 'twas written in the law,
 That no man should affect his brother's wife,
 On pain of being childless. Then he turn'd,
 And pointed where the Baptist chid the Tetrarch,
 Declaring

Declaring it unlawful that he kept
 His brother Philip's wife. I read the places,
 But told his majesty I humbly thought
 He misconceiv'd the sense. The brother's wife
 Was but forbidden while the brother liv'd.
 Immediately I shew'd him in the law,
 Where 'twas commanded, the one brother dead,
 The other who surviv'd should take his wife;
 And quoted from Josephus and Eusebius,
 That when the Baptist, for his brother's wife,
 Rebuk'd the Tetrarch, Philip was alive.

BONVISE.

But still your argument could not prevail.

SIR THOMAS.

I was not then aware what secret cause
 Had mov'd his majesty to wish divorc'd
 His exemplary queen; else had I said
 Much less concerning her. But I was warm,
 And the sweet memory of poor Cath'rine's virtues,
 Which I have often witness'd, and much strove
 To plant among my daughters here at home,
 Made me protect her with an earnest tongue.
 O Bonvise! virtue in a queen is rare.
 When it appears we should with ardent zeal
 Approve and cherish it. Royal example
 Makes it the fashion to be good. All eyes
 Regard her motions, and what she performs
 All imitate. So are her private deeds,
 Her conjugal affection, piety,

C

Motherly

Motherly care, humility, and patience,
 The source of general merit. Who removes,
 Or wishes to unsettle such a queen,
 Consults not private neither public good.

BONVISE.

Agreed—and never may we see the day
 When Bullen—

SIR THOMAS.

Softly, we presume too far.
 Say nothing here at least, for in this walk,
 As I have sat to read, or stood to muse,
 The king has often, unperceiv'd, approach'd
 And touch'd my shoulder. Listen, for methinks
 Some one is near us now. We'll step aside.

(*Exeunt.*)

Enter CECILIA, and immediately after HERON.

CECILIA.

Ah! here he comes. I hope he'll not perceive
 I'm out of humour. Hem! good morning Sir.

HERON.

Who calls? good morning. We are met at last,
 But, plague upon my memory, I forgot
 Whether you bade me turn to right or left,
 And have been wand'ring for an hour and half,
 In hopes to meet you on the river's bank
 Beyond the house.

CECILIA.

I told you to the left.
 And here have I been walking long alone,
 Commending

Commending your attention. Sir, perhaps
You overslept yourself.

HERON.

Not I, indeed.

The sun was scarce so early. I was up
Ere he had shot one beam across the Thames,
And having stood awhile to see his orb
Slowly emerge, and his red morning rays
Dance on the ruffled water, left my room,
And have been seeking till this very moment
Thee my companion.

CECILIA.

Had the charming maid,
You blush'd to think of as we talk'd last night,
Commanded you to rise at break of day
To be her morning beau, you'd not have slept
Till you had made of ev'ry word she spoke
A faithful memorandum in your heart.
Till you had thought so often what was said,
It had been all engrav'd upon your mind,
As lastingly as elegant inscription
Upon a royal tomb.

HERON.

And so I thought
Should your kind invitation; but my care
Not to forget, made me scarce half remember.
Like an ill-treated boy, who fears correction,
I learn'd my lesson surely, but my dread
Not to be perfect, made me hit the fault

I studied to avoid. Forgive it then,
 And let not much severity defeat
 My hopeful progress. Bid me come again,
 And mercy once experienc'd shall prevent
 The innocent errors of a tim'rous mind,
 And make me true for ever.

CECILIA.

True for ever !

What if your charmer had been by to hear.
 Those words had little pleas'd her. But good Sir,
 Since we are met, give me five minutes praise
 Of this your nameless fair one. Now begin.

HERON.

Indeed you lay a task most hard upon me.
 For who has language worthy to relate
 The charms of her whom I adore and love.
 She is notauteous, it is true, but good.
 Her voice is pleasant as the mellow flute,
 Heard at a distance in a winding vale,
 As summer's evening closes ; as the horn
 Blown on the mountains, its melodious tones
 Falling so faintly on the listner's ear,
 He holds his breath to hear them. All her words
 Are laden with the treasures of good sense,
 Which she imparts to all, and spares to none ;
 Yielding her bounties with a grace so free,
 'Twould make a boor enamour'd of politeness.
 Her mind abounds in knowledge, but her tongue
 Betrays it never. With effectual care

She

A TRAGEDY.

37

She hides her excellence, and has so long
 Studiously wink'd upon her own perfections,
 She seems to have o'erlook'd her great defect;
 And is indeed most modest, praying still
 For winning graces which she owns already.

CECILIA.

Poor worthy girl! I hope you love her truly.

HERON.

Most truly—she deserves it. But alas!
 I never yet could find that she loves me.

CECILIA.

Has she declar'd she does not? But what then?
 Had she declar'd it, it might not be true.
 Sir, woman is deceitful. She delights
 To hide her passion, sometimes to torment,
 Sometimes because her poor misgiving heart
 Cannot find words to own it. Honest love
 Is ever silent, and we then love most
 When you the least suspect it.

HERON.

On that hope

I build my happiness. I live upon it
 Like theameleon on his proper food,
 The insubstantial air. Since you have own'd
 Woman may love and yet that love conceal,
 I feel more confident. And let me ask
 Whence learn'd Cecilia that most welcome truth?

CECILIA.

You question me too closely.

C 3

HERON.

HERON.

Come, be bold.

Requite my tale with one of equal length,
 And tell me the perfections of that youth,
 Who sits upon the throne of your regard.

CECILIA (*in surprise.*)

My Lady Alice and my father here ?
 What shall we do ? Away, they see us not.

(*Exeunt.*)*Enter* SIR THOMAS *and* LADY MORE.

LADY MORE.

Now let me whisper in your private ear
 A word or two of family concerns.
 I must apprize you of a circumstance
 Which gives me much uneasiness.

SIR THOMAS.

What is't ?

Be brief and tell it me.

LADY MORE.

Some days ago,
 I overheard a thoughtless child of your's,
 Your own Eliza, in the garden bower
 Talking with Dancy.

SIR THOMAS.

Did she tell her love ?

LADY MORE.

Yes, she confess'd she lov'd him, and the youth
 Made warm professions of his love for her.

SIR

SIR THOMAS.

Then can the secret passion of her heart
 No longer be denied. Poor silent girl,
 I thought the joy that sat upon her brow
 Was awkwardly put on. Long has she hid,
 Fearing to make it known, this innocent love.
 She thinks, perhaps, that I shall discommend her.

LADY MORE.

Will you bestow her on a man so poor?
 Roper has expectations; but this youth
 Is but a second son, whose elder brother
 Were scarce a match sufficient.

SIR THOMAS.

Lady More,

I tell you not what my intention is.
 But be advis'd to cast an eye more kind
 On merit without fortune. Frugal nature
 Often denies her talents to the rich,
 Giving them largely to the man who needs,
 And has no other portion. Noble souls
 Daily emerge from darkness and retreat,
 From unknown families and scanty means,
 To fit with princes. So the ardent youth,
 Born to no titles, no estates or friends,
 Outsoars the great and rich, and looking down
 From the high summit of true dignity,
 Pities their littleness, whose scornful eyes
 Once laugh'd at him below.

C 4

LADY

SIR THOMAS MORE:

LADY MORE.

Some may be such.

But Dancy is an awkward shame-fac'd boy,
 Who makes no promise; and I think, Sir Thomas,
 Your daughter, if she weds him, is undone.

SIR THOMAS.

Fear not my Lady. I have studied man
 Longer than you have. I have learn'd to fear
 The blossom that is early, and its leaves
 Too soon exposes to the chilly spring.
 But much I hope from the more modest bud,
 That hides its head and gathers secret strength,
 Scarce blown at midsummer. An awkward gait,
 Unpolish'd manners and a fether'd tongue,
 A sheepish countenance and burning cheek,
 Are clouds in which true genius loves to rise.
 And thus obscur'd, like a November sun,
 She makes her heav'nly progress unobserv'd,
 Till softly thro' the gloom she steals her way
 In full meridian glory.

LADY MORE.

As you please.

Were she my daughter I should still oppose you.

SIR THOMAS.

Well, well, proceed. I have not yet consented.

(Exit LADY MORE.)

But I will shortly, for that youth deserves
 Lib'ral encouragement. If Héron thrives
 And takes Cecilia, I'll make up a purse

For

A TRAGEDY.

41

For Dancy and Eliza. My son John
May spare for one, the other two provided. (*Exit.*)

Enter HERON and CECILIA.

CECILIA.

I fear you have transgress'd the bounds of truth.

HERON.

I'll summon my friend Bonvise to attest it.
Yourself shall ask him, while I stand aloof,
If all the purpose of my coming hither
Was not to own my love, and yield a heart
Entirely your's. Indeed the peerless fair one,
Whom I have prais'd so warmly, and not nam'd,
Was none but thou Cecilia. And I think,
Would but Cecilia's tongue the truth reveal,
The favour'd youth whom her reluctant lips
So fairly pictur'd; was indeed none else
But my unworthy self. Come, come be bold.

CECILIA.

'Tis true, I much esteem you. Make me sure
You have not wrong'd another, all my heart
Is only your's.

HERON.

Most generous confession !

I swear I have not wrong'd a soul alive.
And here I give my bond, and with a kiss
Seal it most surely, I will look no farther,
But satisfied to own a pearl so fair,
A gem so bright, be with my wealth content.
This hand, Cecilia, shall bestow once more

Before

Before the altar, then we fly away
To solitude and peace.

CECILIA.

A moment's pause.

You are too sanguine. Hide we love a while.
'Twill grow in secret like the hopeful plant,
Whose shelter'd infancy defies the storm.
Think it not much to wait, for time has wings
Swift as the eagle's, and can fly as soon
From earth to heav'n. When Jacob was in love,
We read he serv'd for Rachel seven years;
Yet so he lov'd her, that a task so long
Seem'd but a few short days. Be your's as true
As his love was, and you shall feel as little
The torment of delay. Come, look not sad,
For sadness is infectious. If your brow
Seems melancholy, mine will gather from it
The hue of discontent. Be brisk and gay,
As if the secret of Cecilia's love
Had not escap'd her. Oh! you're wondrous grave.
Hide, hide it, or away. My father comes.

(Exit. HERON.)

I'm glad he's gone. His looks would have betray'd us.
What shall I do? I feel my face on fire.
My father may not mark it, for my glass
Tells me I blush, like the dark Ethiop,
Invisibly. I hope it is so. Hem.
Good morning, Sir.

(Enter SIR THOMAS.)

S I R

SIR THOMAS.

Good morning to Cecilia.

You rise betimes. I heard your chamber door
Creak to the orient sun some hours ago.
What, has my daughter walk'd so long alone?
Something disturbs her peace. Her mind is vex'd
With care or love. Perhaps the rhyming fit
Makes pris'ner her attention. Poet like,
She could not sleep for thinking, but stole out
To ring the chimes of fancy undisturb'd
In the still ear of morning. Else perhaps
She would have tap'd her father's door as wont,
And waited till he met her.

CECILIA.

Sir, I thought

You might be wearied, and in want of rest
After your journey.

SIR THOMAS.

Why in want of rest?

I rode no farther than from Hampton Court.
Was that a journey for a summer's day?
'Twas hardly exercise. No, no, Cecilia,
I see the reason. An old father's arm
Is not so welcome as a younger man's.
Who left you and withdrew this moment?

CECILIA.

Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

Was it not Heron?

CECILIA.

SIR THOMAS MORE:

CECILIA.

Yes Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

Then his arm

Supported your's to day, and 'twas for him

You rose so early, and forgot your father.

Well, well, let youth associate with the young,

And leave the grey head to his sober task

Of contemplation. Met you by appointment?

CECILIA.

Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

Met you by appointment?

CECILIA.

With much shame

I own we did Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

See the truth will out.

And what have you convers'd of?

CECILIA.

Nothing, Sir—

Worth your attention.

SIR THOMAS.

But perhaps it was.

I love to hearken to the simple chat

Of prattling infants. From the lip of youth

I draw a sweeter pleasure, to remark

How reason dawns toward her perfect day,

How passion kindles and impels the soul

To all the useful purposes of life.
 Come, be no longer secret. Make a friend
 Of him who most regards you. Tell your father
 What was your conversation? Was it love?
 Be not ashamed to own it. He lov'd once,
 And still remembers with a lover's sigh
 Your poor departed mother. She lov'd him,
 And had a brow as full of woe as your's,
 Till by entreaty he extorted from her
 The secret you conceal. What said the youth?

CECILIA.

He told me of a maid he long had lov'd—

SIR THOMAS.

And told you 'twas yourself.

CECILIA.

He did Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

Well,

And what said you?

CECILIA.

I told him of a youth

Whom I regarded——

SIR THOMAS.

And that youth was Heron.

Honest confession! Was it true, Cecilia?

CECILIA.

Most true Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

What said he?

CECILIA.

CECILIA.

He took my hand,
And said I should be his.

SIR THOMAS.

And did your heart
Warmly consent?

CECILIA.

As warmly as it could, Sir,
My father's leave not ask'd.

SIR THOMAS.

Suppose that leave
Withheld for ever; could you shun the youth
And stifle love, your father disapproving?
Tell me the truth.

CECILIA.

Sir, 'twere an arduous task.
I'd try and be obedient, tho' I died.

SIR THOMAS.

I know it well. It ever was your care
To be obedient. I will not withhold
Leave so deserved. I give you free consent,
And am most happy you have won a youth
Worthy your love. When daughters make a choice
Wife as Cecilia's, 'tis the father's pride
To crown it with success.

CECILIA.

Dear Sir, I thank you.

SIR THOMAS.

Be cheerful then. You may if Heron pleases

To

To day be wedded. There will be at Church
A couple not unknown to you or him.
I say to-day, because this afternoon
I must away to Greenwich to the king,
And know not when I shall return. What say you?

CECILIA.

Sir, I am much perplex'd. If I consent
Must I forsake your house?

SIR THOMAS.

Heron perhaps,
Will not dislike to live with you and me.
My house is roomy and will hold us all.
Make him proposals. When your father dies,
You must have other homes—but while he lives,
He is content to lodge and feed you all,
And all your husbands.

CECILIA.

Sir I'll go directly.

SIR THOMAS.

Go. If my Lady tells you breakfast waits,
Tell her I come. (*Exit Cecilia.*) Poor girl, how
large a load

Of secret trouble has thy mind escap'd
In a few moments. When I met her here,
She could no more have trip'd so gaily home,
Than the tir'd traveller whose weary limbs
A feather almost crushes. A light heart
Quickens the pace, and makes the foot alert.
It teaches it to mock the poet's art,

To

To move in numbers, and express the mind
 In measur'd dance, which has a tongue to sing
 Almost as sweetly as the lyre itself.
 Well, one is happy, and but one remains
 Who needs my consolation. She, dear heart,
 Imagines that her secret love is hid,
 And fears to tell it, left her father frown.
 I would indeed young Dancy had been rich
 In money as in virtue. But 'tis well
 His only want is wealth. Better my child
 Love worth and poverty than wealth and vice.
 A daughter that o'erlooks the proud parade,
 And silver'd equipage of affluent guilt,
 To smile at modesty that makes no shew,
 But meets her unattended, all his train
 Virtue and learning, has discerning eyes.
 Who bids her mend her choice, deserves to die
 Without a daughter to lament his end.
 But Dancy comes.—

Enter DANCY.

DANCY.

Good morning to Sir Thomas.

SIR THOMAS.

What, is it breakfast time?

DANCY.

I think it is, Sir,

Or I had not return'd so soon.

SIR THOMAS.

Alone?

Where

Where is Eliza? Is she gone before?
Or is she yet behind?

DANCY.

She has not walk'd
Some days, Sir Thomas. She has spent her hours
Chiefly in music, singing plaintive airs,
And sing'ring lessons of a serious mood
In her own chamber. If my ear be just,
She's playing now. I hear a tinkling sound,
Which seems to come from yonder open casement,
Her chamber window.

SIR THOMAS.

Let us both draw near
And listen. Music has a potent charm
Join'd with the graces of the morning. Hark
(ELIZA sings.)

SIR THOMAS.

How sweet that little air. Is it all sung?
'Twas like the love note of the nightingale.

DANCY.

And like that note, the sweeter, from the bough
Heard unexpected, and no songster seen.
The sweeter that the bird was passing shy,
And had not warbled with a strain so free,
Conscious who stood to hear. The sweeter too
That we enjoy'd a pleasure won by stealth,
By mute approach and unobserv'd attention.

SIR THOMAS.

Ay, Sir, we should find nothing sweet on earth,

D

But

But for the pains we use in the pursuit.
 Soon won, is soon despis'd. Where the heart pants
 With fear one moment and with hope the next,
 Accomplishing its purpose thro' despair,
 A toy obtain'd is like the victor's crown,
 Which gives him joy for ever. Who comes here?
 Eliza? 'tis so.

Enter ELIZA.

Sir, the breakfast waits.

My Lady is impatient.

SIR THOMAS.

Let it wait,

For now we're met, we must proceed to business.
 Eliza, thee I question. Is there, child,
 One in the world thy honest heart esteems,
 And can for ever love? go, bring him hither.
 I will not see another day elapse
 Till I have made you happy in your choice.

ELIZA.

Sir, you confound me.

SIR THOMAS.

Dancy, take this hand.

Ask her to whom she gives it. If the youth
 Be leagues remote, fly like an arrow to him,
 And tell him nothing hinders, I consent.

DANCY.

Sir, I presume, if I may speak the truth,
 The poor unworthy youth, who would obtain
 Eliza's hand, and whom she would reward

With

A TRAGEDY.

51

With nothing less, had she a tongue to own it,
Need not be sought beyond the narrow bounds
Of this your garden.

SIR THOMAS.

Then be quick and find him.
Unlink those hands, and let Eliza's self
Look for the man she honours. Is he here?

ELIZA.

Sir, I perceive too well, my forward love
Has not escap'd you. With a face of shame
I own this youth has lov'd me, and my heart,
Not proof to his attractions, has lov'd him.
I strove to curb affection, till at least
Your countenance should bid it live and prosper,
But had not power. So with graceless freedom
I have presum'd to center all my hopes
On Dancy. Yet if you, Sir, disapprove,
I will endeavour to repeal my fault,
By bidding him who loves me, no hard task,
To find a wife more worthy.

SIR THOMAS.

Let him seek
Ages and ages, he shall never find—

DANCY.

One whom he more desires and less deserves.

SIR THOMAS.

Take her, and be ye happy. For the means
Of present maintenance, look up to me.
Live in my house. I'll take you by the hand,

Open the way before you, point the steps
Which lead to affluence and good preferment,
And be it your's to follow without fear.
Dismiss some little of this awkward shame,
And own assurance worthy your deserts.
Great is the man who studies to be good,
And conscious dignity becomes him well.
Come follow me. The Curate has had notice.
We'll take a hasty breakfast, and to church.

(Exeunt.)

Enter SIR JOHN, CECILIA, and HERON.

SIR JOHN.

And so you wish to leave me? well, well, well.
Nurs'd by my hand from helpless infancy,
Till now a woman, you forget your friend,
And in the wise extravagance of nature,
Prefer the sapling, which you never tried,
To the old faithful prop, yet sound and strong,
And never known untrue. You wish to go,
And leave me at my setting. 'Twas my hope
You would attend me to the eve of life.

HERON.

She shall, Sir; faithful as the splendid star,
Betimes apparent in the soften'd beam
Of still withdrawing day, and found so true,
It ever follows the departing sun,
Tho' first and fairest of the host of night.

SIR JOHN.

Well, well, do as you please. I'll walk to church

And

And give the bride away. I want no crutch,
Tho' almost ninety. With my staff alone
I shall be able yet to reach the verge
Of life's unequal journey.

CECILIA.

Sir, my arm
Shall still support you. Live the life of man
Twice and thrice over, I will not desert you;
Ready to own your goodness, and repay
All I am able to my latest hour.

SIR JOHN.

Well, I believe you. For that honest tongue
Has never yet deceiv'd me. It was wont,
On all occasions, to be plain and true,
Tho' speedy as the race-horse or the swallow.
Come lead me in, for I am almost spent.
As soon as we have breakfasted and rested,
We'll ask your father's leave, and go to church.

(Exeunt.)

A C T III.

S C E N E—*Sir Thomas's Library.*SIR THOMAS *and all his Family at Dinner.*

SIR THOMAS.

PROCEED we with dispatch, or I must fly
 Ere we have ~~toasted~~ these our wedded friends.
 Fleet as the hare is Time, when happy man
 Entreats him to retard his rapid hours;
 But, when in woe he prays him to be gone,
 More tardy than the slow-worm or the snail.
 Come, happiness to all whose hearts are one,
 To wives and husbands. May ye never jar,
 But live to the remotest hours of life
 Concordant as the notes of fellow pipes
 That sound for ever charming unison,
 Cecilia, mark my lesson.

C E C I L I A.

Sir, I do,

And hope my husband will have never cause
 To wish undone the fortune of to-day.
 But women, let me tell him, are deceitful.
 They wear a gentle aspect till they wed,
 And ever after domineer. So puffs

Fondles

Fondles the mouse her pris'ner, with light paw
 Touching his velvet coat, and purring loud
 Her treach'rous promise to be ever kind.
 She shuts her eyes and seems almost asleep
 Hiding the tigress in a patient smile.
 But short the respite—mercy soon expires—
 She springs with savage fierceness on her prey,
 Fixes her teeth and talons, swears his death
 And eats him up in anger. Sir, I'll tell you
 To whom the man who seeks a faultless wife
 May be compar'd. He's like the foolish boy
 Who thrust his hand into a bag of vipers
 To find a single eel, and thought it hard
 The reptile bit him, and the fish escap'd.

SIR THOMAS.

See, Sir, how bold and talkative a wife
 You have to bear withal. 'Twas nature's mind
 To make a lawyer of my youngest daughter,
 Had fashion been her friend. She has a tongue
 That never rests. 'Tis a perpetual clock
 That needs no winding up. She was a prattler
 E'en from her cradle. She would talk and laugh
 From dawn to sunset, and was scarce content
 To let her active wit lie still, and rest
 E'en in her sleep.

CECILIA.

Yes, Sir, she has a tongue
 That never halts for want of argument.
 She can dispute, and reason, and tell tales,

As endless as the coward's vain account
 Of bloody battles and heroic acts,
 Or Lady Faddle's tedious history
 Of her grave ancestors of Faddle-hall.

SIR THOMAS.

Come, come, no scandal, Madam. Lash the vice,
 But ever spare the person. Of offence
 Speak boldly to the ear of him who errs,
 But never tell him that himself offends.
 I know a lady who finds fault with others,
 Yet has some little foibles in herself.
 She takes of liberty too much herself,
 Giving to others not enough. She loves
 To laugh, and sing, and ramble o'er the field,
 But prisons the poor butterfly and bird.

CECILIA, *rising*.

Sir, I perceive that lady is Cecilia.
 Let me acquit myself. You have been looking
 Into the little boxes on my shelf.
 You found in most a butterfly or moth.
 I had not cheated them of one small link
 Of native liberty. I found them all
 Just at the close of Autumn; trav'ling some,
 Mere harmless caterpillars, to find shelter
 From the keen breath of all-consuming Winter,
 Some cradled in a warm ingenious shell,
 And fasten'd to the windows. To them all
 I lent a fost'ring hand, made them warm beds
 Of wool and cotton, found them each a house,
 And

And pleas'd as Pharaoh's daughter to preserve
The little friendless Hebrew, day by day
Watch'd the return of scarce-apparent life,
Sustain'd for months by nothing. At the last,
Each from his tomb arose, superbly cloath'd,
And mounting on a pair of beauteous wings
Left me rejoicing. For the prison'd bird,
'Tis a poor gold-finch that I bought by chance
Of cruel boys, who stole it from the nest.
It could not fly, and I had much to do
To find the food it lik'd. I fed it long,
And, when I thought it fledg'd, unlock'd the cage,
And bade it fly away. It flew indeed,
But had not heart to leave me, perching still
Upon my head, my shoulder, or my hand,
And oft returning to the cage it left.
It had been cruel to have forc'd it out.
So when the day is clear, and puffs withdrawn,
I open all my windows and my cage,
Fasten my door, and bid it go or stay
E'en as it pleases. While I read within
It never leaves me. When I stray abroad,
I often find it in the garden walk,
Hopping from branch to branch, happy to twit
Close at my side. And still at my return
I meet it in my chamber, or alone
Or by a friend attended, whom its tongue
Advise to be bold, but pleads in vain,
For yet it lives unmated.

SIR JOHN.

Brave defence!

Let me be judge, and be the verdict found
For the defendant. She has won her cause.
The daughter triumphs and the father fails.

SIR THOMAS.

Sir, I confess it. She has well explain'd
The motives of her conduct. Had we all
Intentions good and generous as her's,
Law were a muzzled bear, that could not bite,
And lawyers beggars. Let me pay the costs.
And more, I promise ere the week expires,
To yield her damages shall thrice requite
The wrong I've done her. Let it now subside.
Time hurries. I can drink but one glass more,
And hark a moment to Eliza's song,
Then I must leave you, and away to court.
Come, Sir, the King. (*They all drink the King.*)

Enter the KING.

KING.

The King is here to thank you.
Ladies, be seated, for we come to hear,
Not to disturb you. Here's a vacant chair.
Deem us still absent, and let mirth proceed.
The song, the song.

SIR THOMAS.

Sir, give us leave to breathe.
Your unexpected presence has surpris'd us.
Our songstress is but young, and seldom dares

Her

Her simple strain before the public ear.
 Your majesty's attention has, I see,
 Quite overaw'd her. Let us pause a while,
 And first apologize for our rude song.
 To your judicious ear it cannot give
 Exquisite pleasure. 'Tis but modest air
 Embellish'd with no learning, made to please
 The herd of hearers, not to win applause
 From stubborn critics and fastidious taste,
 Like the grave compositions of our King.

K I N G.

Ay, ay, my masses—they are grave indeed,
 And tolerably happy. I thank God
 He gave me talents, tho' he made me great.

S I R T H O M A S.

Without a doubt, Sir, to your ready pen
 Divinity and music have ow'd much.
 We must intreat you to be partly deaf,
 And let your judgment sleep, while we perform,
 To give it no offence. Come, we'll begin.

(*ELIZA sings, and is followed by CECILIA. During the song SIR THOMAS whispers to his father, SIR JOHN makes signs to the rest, and as soon as it is ended they all retire, leaving the KING, and SIR THOMAS together.*)

K I N G.

Sweet music, Sir, sweet music. But why fly
 Our fair companions? Is the concert done?

S I R.

S I R T H O M A S.

Sir, they have apprehensions that you come
 Not to be wearied with their poor performance,
 But to consult their father. I had fought,
 Obedient to your majesty's command,
 Your court at Greenwich, just about to rise
 When you appear'd amongst us, but your visit
 Seem'd to repeal your order, and methought,
 More active than myself, you came to Chelsea
 To hasten business which had else been stayed.

K I N G.

Such was my purpose. I am come, Sir Thomas,
 Knowing your great integrity and learning,
 Once more to question you of my divorce.
 You know the painful scruples I once urg'd
 Relating to my conscience. They exist
 And still disturb me, but I know your mind,
 And mention them no more. I bring you now
 Reasons of state, which, I beseech you, weigh
 With great deliberation, and unfold
 Your whole opinion of them, not abash'd,
 Lest the thing spoken should offend our ear.
 Suppose my former scruples done away,
 Suppose me of salvation not despairing,
 Tho' wedded to my brother Arthur's wife.
 I have one daughter. Should her father die,
 What are the perils that await my kingdom?
 You know the emperor and king of France
 Have both refus'd her, urging for excuse

She

She was not born in wedlock. When my father
Espous'd me to the widow of my brother,
You know the old Archbishop Warham told him
'Twas inconsistent with the law of God,
Which popes could not dispense with. Mov'd to doubt
You know he made me, on that very day
I reach'd the period of my thirteenth year,
Enter a private protestation 'gainst my marriage.
Again, you know he gave me solemn charge
Upon his death-bed, never to consummate
A marriage so preposterous. His advice,
Misled by Winchester, I disobey'd.
And see the consequence—two princes dead—
Only my daughter Mary left alive,
And Catharine my wife no longer fruitful.
Suppose I die. My sister Marg'ret's son,
The king of Scotland, will put in a claim
To England's crown, declaring this my daughter
Not lawful heir. My sister Mary too,
Queen dowager of France, will urge pretensions,
Alledging the young king of Scots a stranger,
My daughter illegitimate. And thus,
O horrible to think of! this whole land
Will be again expos'd to civil broils,
Worse than the wars of Lancaster and York.
Three pow'rful parties will let loose their rage,
And my poor people be consum'd in vain,
As in the days of Warwick and foul Richard.
Now, let me ask you, is it not a deed

I owe

I owe my kingdom, to divorce a wife
 Whose issue are attended by God's curse,
 And wed another which may bring me sons,
 Whose solid title cannot be disputed?
 Speak to this argument, and nothing fear.

SIR THOMAS.

Sir, 'tis a matter so profound and deep,
 I have no judgment in it.

KING.

Well, think of it.

I know your cautious mind is always late
 And tardy to determine. Weigh it well,
 And meet me presently at Hampton Court.
 Think of my kingdom, and my hapless self,
 A prey to scruples that disturb my rest,
 And eat away the pith of life and health.
 Be my physician, give me good advice,
 Remove my malady and ease my heart,
 I'll give you good preferment for your pains. (*Exit.*)

SIR THOMAS.

Ay, so it is. Lust will have no denial.
 What specious argument, what neat excuse,
 Cannot the hungry libertine invent,
 To shew the folly of wise abstinence,
 The wisdom of indulgence. Ah! poor Queen!
 I see it thy fortune to come down,
 And fall a victim to contempt and wrong.
 Yet shalt thou find a friend, whose hand and heart
 Shall dare sustain thee, tho' he lose his head.

I'll hence this moment, open my whole mind,
Convince the King how much he is bewitch'd,
And plead thy cause again. Cath'rine perhaps
May yet prevail, give her an advocate
Whose warm defence shall clothe in equal terms
The silent agonies of injur'd worth.
I'll go and bid my family adieu,
And follow after him without delay. *(Exit.)*

SCENE—*Hampton Court.*

Enter the KING and ANNE BULLEN.

ANNE.

Your majesty is speedy.

KING.

My dear Anne,
How could I loiter when I thought of you.

ANNE.

What says Sir Thomas, Sir.

KING.

Why, nothing yet.
I left him to consider. But I think
He may as well sustain the joint assault
Of winds and waters in one current rushing,
As conquer argument so strong and pithy.
Dear girl, I shall my purpose yet accomplish,
And make thee partner of my bed and throne.
If we can win the suffrage of Sir Thomas,
I care not for a host of angry popes,
Legates, and Cardinals. His countenance,

Fam'd

Fam'd as he is for learning, wit and worth,
 Will warp the multitude to deem our marriage
 Judicious and expedient. Should he yield,
 None can dispute our justice. The divorce
 Shall be effected, and my gentle Anne
 Be rais'd to honour shall become her beauty,
 A jewel set in gold. Kifs me, you rogue.

A N N E.

Allure me not. You are another's husband.
 When death or dispensation has unlock'd
 The chain that binds you, and we both are one,
 I may consent. But ah! 'tis not for Anne,
 Tho' she adores you, to be made your queen.
 Lefs she will never be. No, she will shun
 Courts and the smile of kings, to die in peace
 An honest wife. She knows a noble youth
 Who will receive her with extended arms,
 And gladly make her mistress of his house.
 Him will she seek, content with humble means,
 And not ambitious to be seen at Court.

K I N G.

Fie, fie, you shall not leave me. You shall reign
 The queen of England and her monarch's glory.
 I'll send Campeggio instantly away,
 And bid my officers insult him. Rome
 Shall never more have footing in this isle.
 I'll rule the church myself. I'll play the fonn
 Of Macedonian Philip, and if art
 Cannot untie this everlasting knot

I'll

A TRAGEDY.

65

I'll draw my sword and cut it.

(Enter NORFOLK.)

Well, what now?

NORFOLK.

Sir Thomas More waits on your majesty. (Exit.)

KING.

Oh! is he come. Dear Anne, retire awhile.

I trust he brings us comfort by his speed.

I'll seek thee presently and tell the news.

(Exit ANNE.)

(Enter SIR THOMAS.)

Welcome, Sir Thomas, welcome. You have wings
Swift as the falcon's, before which the flight
Of doves themselves is tardy.

SIR THOMAS.

Sir, I came

Impell'd by duty, which has equal power
To the sulphureous grain, that ushers home
Speedy as lightning or immediate thought,
It's deadly messenger.

KING.

What news d'ye bring?

Am I to thank you for content and ease?
Or come you, like your own destructive ball,
To kill and not to cure? Why stand you silent?
If there was aught amiss in what I urg'd,
Boldly condemn it; but if aught appear'd,
And sure it was so, just and reasonable,
Be not unwilling to compose my soul,

E

And

66 SIR THOMAS MORE :

And feed it with the milk of kind advice.

SIR THOMAS.

Sir, I would gladly serve you—if I could.
I would as freely give you my advice
To do the thing you wish, as satisfy
Innocent longing in an only child,
Could it be done with honour, and no loss
To your own credit. But, as in my child,
The more I lov'd it, I should strive the more
To conquer wishes that might undermine
Life's little happiness, so, Sir, to you
I shew a froward and ungente mood,
Daring your anger by discreet denial,
Rather than gratifying dang'rous hopes
By evil counsel and undue compliance.

KING.

Well, well, I am not angry. Let me hear,
What's your opinion ?

SIR THOMAS.

'Tis a perilous case.

Your majesty has taught me to fear much,
Should Heaven bless you with no other issue
Than the young Princess Mary.

KING.

Ay, fierce wars,
Wars that may make my kingdom swim in blood.
More fiery and consumptive than the wrath
Of Turks and Saracens, or wand'ring Arabs,
That drop their quarrel never.

SIR

SIR THOMAS.

Yet, dread Sir,

I must acquaint you, were the cause my own,
I'd trust to Providence. The clouded dawn
Has often brighten'd, and a frowning morn
Been the rude prologue of a placid day.
What Heav'n intends no mortal can avert.
We may appease, but by no art evade
The blow it threatens. If we still offend,
Our ingenuity defeats itself,
Our labour yields us nothing, but we sink
The more we struggle in the gulf we shun.
Sir, give me audience. Cath'rine is your wife,
As lawfully as wife was ever wedded.
Consider, if to 'scape a future evil
You do a present wrong, shall not God's curse
Be doubled? Is it likely you shall thrive
By being too ungentle to a widow,
The widow of your brother, your own wife,
And what is more, a widow that for worth
Was never equall'd! Question your own heart.
It will assure you that the piteous moan
Of injur'd innocence, when thus oppress'd
Alone and helpless, has a friend above,
Who will require avengement of her wrongs
'Gainst all the kings on earth. Forgive me, Sir,
I am too bold. My sov'reign lady's virtues
Make me forget my manners. Would to God
Your majesty would once more look upon her,

Restore her to your favour, and live happy,
 As I have found you many and many a day
 With her alone. Think of the pleasant hours
 When she, all gentleness, sat by your side,
 Acting the patient wife and pious mother,
 Her infant daughter sleeping in her arms,
 Her eyes fast fix'd on you, and beaming forth
 Affection inexpressible, the while
 Her tongue, in gentle whispers, told her heart.

KING.

No more, no more. She was a queen of queens.
 I lov'd her truly. She has ever liv'd
 An unexampled wife. I'll go and walk.
 I'll think of what you say, and if my mind
 Finds nothing to disturb it, come again
 And act as you advise me. (*Exit.*)

SIR THOMAS.

Have I quench'd

The furious flame ! May it be quench'd for ever.
 I'll stay and watch it. If it mounts again
 'Twill be more vehement for this repulse ;
 Like the smith's forge, that glows with double heat
 Upon its footy master, often dash'd
 With watery allayment. Let it mount.
 Vigorous reason may again subdue it.
 Hush ! some one enters.

(*Enter NORFOLK.*)

Seeks your grace the king ?

He's just withdrawn.

NORFOLK.

A TRAGEDY.

69

NORFOLK.

No, Sir, I come to you.

Sent by my Lady More, who waits without,
And begs admittance to you, out of breath,
And almost spent from her abundant haste
To bring you evil news. See, where she comes.

(Exit NORFOLK.)

Enter LADY MORE.

SIR THOMAS.

My Lady, what disturbs you?

LADY MORE.

Give me leave

To pause one moment, and expect to hear
News that will make your heart ach.

SIR THOMAS.

Speak it quickly.

Are all my daughters well? how does my son?
Who's ill? Sir John? Marg'ret?

LADY MORE.

A sudden fire

Has burnt down all your barns, and half your house.

SIR THOMAS.

God's will be done. And is there nothing left?

LADY MORE.

No, not a straw. Your corn is all consum'd.
There's not provision for another day.

SIR THOMAS.

Part of my house too burnt? Say not the room
In which I kept my papers.

E 3

LADY

LADY MORE.

Yes, that room,
And the two rooms adjoining.

SIR THOMAS.

Worse and worse,
No lives were lost?

LADY MORE.

No, none.

SIR THOMAS.

And no one hurt?

LADY MORE.

None that I hear of.

SIR THOMAS.

Where did it begin?

LADY MORE.

In one of your own barns.

SIR THOMAS.

And from what cause?

LADY MORE.

The negligence of your next neighbour's servant,
As is supposed; who came to borrow straw,
And was too little careful of his light.
His master's barns were burnt as well as yours.

SIR THOMAS.

Poor man! he could but ill afford the loss.
He has eight children and a heavy rent.

LADY MORE.

What shall we do? The workmen must be sent for.
Our house is open both to thieves and weather.

We

A TRAGEDY.

71

We must be saving, and procure a purse
To reinstate ourselves. Shall I dismiss
Some of the servants? Tell me.

S I R T H O M A S.

Let them find

New masters if they can. If they return
Still unprovided, I'll maintain them all.
Discharge none suddenly. 'Tis a hard lot
To be turn'd loose upon a vicious world
With neither oars nor anchor. Such a sea
Might shipwreck honesty tho' built of oak.
Go to your neighbour and enquire his loss.
Give him all comfort, tell him not to fear,
I will repair his fortunes to the full.

L A D Y M O R E.

Surely, Sir Thomas, you forget yourself.
Remember Charity first feeds her own.

S I R T H O M A S.

My Lady, I'm resolv'd that no poor neighbour
Shall suffer for the loss that humbles me,
Tho' it reduce me to a crust of bread.
Do as I bid you. Make the poor man happy,
And be yourselves contented. Go to church
You and your family. Be truly thankful
Life is still left us, and enough to live on.
We shall be richer when it pleases God.
Go and be cheerful. I am nothing sad.
As soon as I have begg'd the king's permission,

E 4

I'll

I'll come and give thanks with you.

(Exit LADY MORE.)

Such is life.

Full of strange casualties which overset
 E'en in an instant the proud work of years.
 Now, could I argue with the Atheist's skill,
 And lie to my own mind, till it believ'd
 All things that happen are the work of chance,
 I should apply the pistol to my ear,
 And die the dupe of cowardly persuasion.
 For I am poor indeed. My papers burnt
 Rob me of more than human heart can think,
 More than my family shall ever know.
 What have I but my places, which depend
 Upon the favour of a fickle king,
 Whom I this moment anger? Let it be,
 If I must fall, the will of Heav'n be done. (Exit.)

SCENE changes to the Gardens.

Enter ANNE BULLEN alone.

I wonder if Sir Thomas and the King
 Be parted yet. It was a knotty point
 That needed such discussion. Oh! I see
 Sir Thomas at this moment takes his leave.
 The King has spied me, and is hither coming.
 Now must I urge him, bring what news he will,
 To put a sudden period to my cause,
 And make me queen, or leave me as I am.

(Enter the KING.)

Your

Your majesty looks sad. I fear Sir Thomas
Brought you no welcome counsel.

KING.

Welcome counsel?

No, he has strain'd the sinews of his wit
Fighting against me. For the wretched widow
He pour'd out all the honey of persuasion—
And 'faith she was an angel.

ANNE.

Sir, adieu.

KING.

Nay, nay, be patient. Tho' he mov'd me much,
I am not conquer'd. I have scruples still.
Now let hear my lovely Bullen plead.
Tell me, dear Anne, what course shall I pursue,
To give content to my distracted mind?

ANNE.

What have kings done before you? Hannibal,
When the strong Alp oppos'd him, hew'd his way;
He fought with and subdued the stubborn rock,
And tumbled his proud head into the vale.

KING.

What mean you, Anne? Speak plain.

ANNE.

Were I a king,

And my desires as laudable as your's,
My kingdom's safety, my domestic peace,
All on one wife and proper act depending,
I'd do that act, tho' to accomplish it
I pay'd my way with twenty thousand heads.

KING.

KING.

And so will I—'sblood, girl, thou hast a spirit
Stout as an Amazon's.

ANNE.

Our ancient kings,
When did they halt and quit the great design,
Awed by remonstrance? Had a subject dar'd
To rule your ancestors as some rule you,
What had he paid?

KING.

The forfeit of his head.

ANNE.

And not the forfeit of his head alone,
But his estates. O Sir, you are too cool,
Too calm and patient with these meddling fools.
And, tho' it is an office of much hazard,
I must inform you, you are much deceiv'd
In those who counsel you—remove them from you.

KING.

What! shall I part with More?

ANNE.

And part for ever.

Send him to heav'n.

KING.

Sweet Anne you counsel ill.

It were a blot that would for ever stain
The page of story, to be so severe
To one so excellent. He has a name

In

In ev'ry corner of the globe, at home
Lov'd for his virtues, and esteem'd abroad
For his great learning, judgment and politeness.
Besides the anger of an English King
Is fenc'd about with forty thousand checks.
He cannot sacrifice his bitterest foe
Without attainder and a bill of wrongs,
To be allow'd him by the jealous lords
And ever factious commons.

ANNE.

Let such bill

Be mov'd and pass'd. It cannot be rejected.
The houses both look up with longing eyes
Eager to serve you. Are there not in each
Of protestants and papists equal halves;
Fearful the one lest you desert the pope,
The other hopeful of a speedy change,
And therefore both obsequious? Trust me, Sir,
The Bey or Sultan has not now a will
More absolute than yours.

KING.

Ay but sweet Anne,

More is an angel in my peoples eyes,
And to oppress him in the adverse hour
Were doubly odious. He has lost by fire
All he possess'd. His buildings are all burnt,
His papers and the profits of his land,
Nor ev'n his house itself preserv'd entire.

ANNE.

ANNE.

Then win him with a bribe. For he has wants
 Whose threatening aspect would the stoutest virtue
 Stare out of countenance. His family
 He loves and feeds, and keeps no sparing house,
 Lib'ral to all who seek him, friends and foes.
 Besides he has a hand for ever open
 To whining beggary, and alms on alms
 Lavishly squanders.

KING.

But what bribe so great
 Shall buy him to our purpose?

ANNE.

Honour, honour.

And with that honour its appendage wealth.
 Advance him to the steeple-top of favour,
 And tell him for that favour he must speak
 The courtiers language, and read nought amiss.
 There is a man that serves your majesty
 Whose place he well might fill—a haughty priest
 Hated by all your people, and averse
 Now at the last to his good master's pleasure,
 Tho' he has fed him with a liberal hand
 For almost twenty years.

KING.

What, Wolsey?

ANNE.

Yes.

He who torments your people with exactions,
 Screwing

Screwing the pence from the lean peasant's hand,
But yielding nothing from his proper purse,
Tho' richly able. He who like a gulf
Swallows preferment, and still thirsts for more.
Prime minister, Lord Chancellor, of York
Arch-bishop, Bishop of Winchester and Durham,
Legate and Cardinal, administrator
Of Bath and Wells, large pensioner withal
Of Charles and Francis. He who like a leech
Sucks from the houses of religious monks
Their whole subsistence, with the modest plea
To found you colleges for wit and learning,
The rather building for himself alive
Imperial palaces, and when deceas'd
Eternal monuments.

KING.

I do believe it—

Yet in the will he open'd when I chid him,
He shew'd me that to me he had bequeath'd
All his possessions. To confirm his word
He gave me instantly this Hampton Court,
Built as he said, on purpose to present me.

ANNE.

So when the thief has stol'n into the house,
He pats the quiet mastiff on the head,
And feeds him bountifully from his wallet.
He by the bribe seduc'd stands by and fawns
And suffers the sly villain undisturb'd,
To reimburse him with his master's gold.

Think

78 SIR THOMAS MORE:

Think you he means to make the king his heir?
 I dare be sworn he glories in his heart
 To see you so unwary, while he strips
 Your family the kingdom of its fleece.
 What is his view but to secure his children
 Born out of wedlock, maintenance and homes;
 To have a thousand scholars chanting mass
 And singing requiems to his guilty soul?

KING.

'Faith you have hit it. Tell me more, my girl.
 I do believe that overweening priest
 Abuses my protection. I remember
 Many unwarrantable acts he did.
 Not long ago he sent away dispatches
 Without my knowledge to the court of Spain,
 Commanding Clarenceux my herald there
 To threaten Charles with war—nay, to declare it.

ANNE.

'Twas one of many his audacious deeds
 That call for chastisement. He plays the prince
 In word and purpose, with amazing pride
 Treating your subjects as if he were king
 And you his minister. The house of lords
 Abhor him as the plague, because they saw
 The rights of Peerage almost crush'd to death
 In the destruction of poor Buckingham.
 The commons hate him for his forward tongue,
 Officiously presuming in their house
 To dictate their proceedings; and because,

Too proud to ask their leave to levy money,
He has oppress'd the nation more than once
With warrants of exaction.

K I N G.

I remember.

He rais'd an insurrection in the city,
Not long ago, by such illegal means.

A N N E.

And laid the blame upon your royal self.
He has the art of soothing, and transfers
At least one half of the vex'd people's hate
Upon your majesty.

K I N G.

Ungrateful cur!

I'll strip him of his honours, turn him out
As naked as he came, and whip him home
To play the tyrant in his native Ipswich.

A N N E.

Believe me, Sir, you cannot find the deed
Would raise you higher in your peoples love.
He has long liv'd by slaughter of your flock.
To you their shepherd they look up with hope.
If you protect them from his bloody knife
And ever busy shears, about your throne
They will assemble with unfeign'd attachment,
Crowding to serve you with their lives and fleeces.
Protect them not, but let him still prevail,
And they shall hate you with supreme disgust
As they hate him.

K I N G.

K I N G.

Thou speakest reason, Anne.

Would all my counsellors were wise as thou art.

A N N E.

Suppose then you dismiss this money'd priest.
 Observe how coldly your divorce proceeds.
 Is it not Wolfey's fault; His lips are shut—
 He countenances nothing, but resolves
 To cross by silence what he dares not thwart
 By open opposition. He has hate,
 How kindled I know not, to me and mine.
 He envies me your majesty's regard,
 And trusts he can oppose substantial bars
 To all your hopes and mine.

K I N G.

But by the Lord

We'll disappoint him. Shall he out to-day?

A N N E.

Mark its expedience. The great seal revok'd
 May purchase More. He cannot be your foe,
 And plead against you, bought at such a price.
 Send the proud Cardinal to die at York,
 Stript of preferment; or if cause appear
 Arrest him of high treason. Such an act
 Will make your people love you, and besides,
 Fill your drain'd coffers with the Card'nal's wealth.
 More will be satisfied, your queen divorc'd,
 And all run smoothly as your heart can wish.
 As for the pope, his menaces are wind.

Regard

Regard him not. Your kingdom is your own,
 And you the head supreme of church and state.
 Your people curse the tyranny of Rome,
 Made wise by study. They will gladly join you,
 Defy the usurpation of the church,
 And cast away its yoke.

K I N G.

Dear, lovely girl,
 Thou art an angel, and hast fill'd my ear
 With doctrine sweeter than the poet's song.
 Be thou my privy council. From thy lips
 Give me sweet kisses for my daily fare,
 And make me wise and happy. Come, you rogue,
 Indulge me once again. Now I am ready.
 I'll send this instant, and command that priest
 To yield me the great seal, and hence for York.
 I will not see him, for his artful tongue
 May move me to compassion. He shall down,
 I swear he shall, and More shall be exalted.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE *changes to* SIR THOMAS'S *Library.*

SIR THOMAS *and* LADY MORE *alone at a Table.*

L A D Y M O R E.

Well, so much for repairs, so much for grain,
 So much for the provision of your house,
 And all together will amount to so much.
 Look at the sum. I think it now exceeds

F

All

All we can raise. And will you still persist
Your neighbour shall lose nothing?

SIR THOMAS.

Not a doit.

My Lady, if I live upon a heath,
That honest man shall be no loser by me.
I'll first repair his loss, and then my own.
He has no friend at court, nor any place
Whose profits may redeem him out of want.
He has work'd hard, and yet could barely live,
Feeding so many little mouths at home,
And forc'd to pay a more than equal rent
To an unthrifty and oppressive landlord.
He never ask'd for all the pains he takes
More than his wants might challenge, food and raiment,
And those he shall have.

(Enter a SERVANT.)

SERVANT.

Sir, the Duke of Norfolk
Wishes to see you.

SIR THOMAS.

Pray him to walk in.

(Exit SERVANT.)

My Lady, take the papers and be gone.

(Exit LADY MORE.)

(Enter NORFOLK.)

Your grace is welcome.

NORFOLK.

Sir, I trust I am,

For

For I am come the messenger of news
 Grateful to all who hear it. It has pleas'd
 Our gracious sov'reign to remove at last
 His odious minister the Cardinal.
 Myself was one of those commission'd by him
 To make demand of the great seal; from which
 He parted with reluctance; not like me,
 Who thus resign it with a cheerful heart,
 To one who merits like Sir Thomas More;
 Happy to hail him, at the king's command,
 England's Lord Chancellor.

SIR THOMAS.

Your grace mistakes.

Is Wolsey fall'n?

NORFOLK.

He is, and boistrous joy
 Is shouting at his ruin. All the streets
 Re-echo with hazzas, God save the king,
 And may he live for ever. Not a soul,
 But bellows extacy from leathern lungs,
 And with exertion sets his face on fire.
 At sight of me they paus'd, and stood to hear,
 Till I had told them what my message was
 To their good friend Sir Thomas. At your name
 Again they bellow'd, lifted high their hands,
 And wav'd their hats; with such a thund'ring shout
 Affailing my poor ears, as made them ring
 Even to Chelsea, and has so confus'd them
 They are scarce yet recover'd.

F 2

SIR

SIR THOMAS.

Sure your grace

Has, in your hurry thro' the public streets,
 Misconstrued what his majesty commanded.
 It cannot be to me he gives the seal.
 I am a layman, of no noble house,
 Impeded with a family of children.
 'Tis usual to bestow it on divines
 And men of learning. Let me pray your grace
 To pause awhile, and recollect yourself.

NORFOLK.

Sir Thomas, I have harbour'd no mistake.
 You are the man to whom the king dispatch'd me.
 To you he order'd me to give this seal,
 And say withal, it was no other cause
 Mov'd him to grant it, but your well-known worth
 And great sufficiency, which overtops
 All that himself could wish, his people hope.
 You must repair as quickly as you can
 To Westminster, and meet us in the Hall;
 Thence to be led by Suffolk and myself
 Into the Star-chamber to take your seat.

(Exit NORFOLK.)

SIR THOMAS.

I will obey your grace. So Wolfey's down,
 And on the ruin of his ancient foe
 More is compell'd to rise. He was a man
 Of vast abilities, and made his king

The

The dread and envy of the farthest world.
 How shall I fill his seat? My little light
 Will be to his but as the taper's ray,
 Which, while the sun was up, was scarce discern'd,
 And had but feeble glory when it sunk.
 I would his majesty had sought elsewhere
 And found an abler man. But since on me
 He piles the load of honour, I receive it,
 Grateful to Providence, which thus supports
 My almost ruin'd house. I'll see the man
 Restor'd to all he lost, tell the good news
 To old Sir John and my dejected children,
 And then away for Westminster with speed. (*Exit.*)

SCENE changes to Hampton Court.

Enter the KING meeting ANNE BULLEN.

KING.

Ah! my sweet Anne, where have you hid yourself?
 You rogue, I bring you news will make your heart
 Grow riotous with joy.

ANNE.

What news, dread Sir.

KING.

The Cardinals are routed. I've sent one
 Smarting with insult to my Lord the Pope.
 The other is depriv'd and gone to Essex
 Till further orders reach him, then to York.
 The peers have found him guilty. Here you rogue,

F 3

Here

Here is an invent'ry of all he had,
 The total sum of his ill-gotten wealth,
 And 'tis all mine. I've sent the seal to More.
 More has accepted it. Within the hour
 I shall expect him here to give me thanks,
 And then I'll urge him to approve my cause.
 And sure he will approve it, for look here,
 Look here, my jewel, here are the opinions
 Of all the Universities in Europe,
 And all are in my favour. I shall yet
 Defeat the arts of that o'er-bearing Pope,
 Live like a Christian blameless, and enjoy
 Peace and my lovely Bullen. Come, a kiss.
 My news deserves it. Hark! what noise was that?

(Enter NORFOLK.)

NORFOLK.

Sir Thomas More waits on your majesty.

KING.

He's welcome. Shew him in. Dear Anne retire.

(*Exeunt NORFOLK one way and ANNE another.*)

(Enter SIR THOMAS.)

Sir Thomas, I have long'd to see you.

SIR THOMAS.

And I too

Have long'd to see the gracious king I serve,
 To thank him for his goodness. With warm heart
 I bless him for this instance of his love,
 Which once more lifts me from distress and want
 To wealth and plenty. I could only wish

Your

Your majesty had found an abler servant
In him whom you thus honour.

KING.

Abler servants

We do not search for, and we cannot find.
Sir Thomas, I have done what I approve,
And what your merits and domestic wants
Demanded at my hands. All that I ask
In recompence of the regard I shew you
Is your advice.

SIR THOMAS.

Which I am bound to give,
Poor as it is, with willingness and truth,
Whenever ask'd.

KING.

Ay, give it me with truth.
Now I consult you. Have you thought at all
Of me and my divorce? What must I do?

SIR THOMAS.

Dread Sir, excuse me. 'Tis a subtle point.
I have been all in all engag'd at home,
Since I departed, in my own concerns.
I have not weigh'd the matter, much disturb'd
By my late sudden losses. Let me pray you,
Consult your other counsellors. My mind
Is all derang'd; and I had never wit
To comprehend the question you propose
With clearness and precision.

F 4

KING.

KING.

Look you here.

Here are the testimonies of the Church,
 Of all the Universities in Europe,
 Of Oxford, Cambridge, Angiers, Bourges, Orleans,
 Thoulouse, Bologna, Padua, and Ferrara;
 And all agree 'twas contrary to law
 To marry Cath'rine, and the dispensation
 Granted by Julius must be deem'd invalid.
 What think you of all this?

SIR THOMAS.

The Church is wise.

The Church is learned. The Church may be right.
 Perhaps it is so. Leaning on the Church,
 Your majesty proceeds on firm support.
 Why need you urge an individual voice?

KING.

Because you have a name in Church and State,
 And all my people and the world at large
 Look up to you, deeming your judgment truth
 And candid equity. I cannot thrive
 And be divorc'd with that applause I wish,
 While you oppose me. To your books again.
 Read with attention and a hearty wish
 To serve your king. I must not be denied
 Your vote and countenance, when the joint voice
 Of total Christendom confirms my scruples.
 Go, and be busy, and your mind convinc'd,
 Seek us again, and be the man we love. *(Exit.)*

SIR

A TRAGEDY.

89

SIR THOMAS *stands awhile in astonishment.*

(*Enter NORFOLK.*)

NORFOLK.

Sir Thomas, an express is just arriv'd,
Who brings intelligence that old Sir John,
Your worth father, is——

SIR THOMAS.

Not dead?

NORFOLK.

Yes, dead.

SIR THOMAS.

Peace to his soul, he could not have expir'd
At a more happy season.

NORFOLK.

So I think.

SIR THOMAS.

Where is the messenger? Conduct me to him.

(*Exeunt.*)

ACT.

A C T. IV.

*The Funeral Proceſſion of SIR JOHN MORE, followed by
SIR THOMAS and all his FAMILY. As they proceed,
SIR THOMAS ſteps aſide, and MARGARET follows
him. The reſt go out and leave them.*

SIR THOMAS.

AY, come, my child. We will not to the grave.
For 'tis a painful thing to ſee interr'd
Thoſe we have lov'd, tho' they depart in years.
I wiſh Cecilia too had ſtept aſide.
She knows not what it is to ſee the earth
Cloſe on the friend we muſt no more behold.

MARGARET.

'Twill grieve her moſt acutely. I was preſent
When he expir'd, and 'twas a moving ſight
To ſee with what ſolicitude ſhe cheer'd
His ſenſible departure. On her brow
Sat anxious pity and aſſiduous hope,
And almoſt charm'd the gradual death away
With ſilent ſoft perſuaſion. At her looks
Sir John himſelf was pleas'd, and with a ſmile,

As

As if to die were easy as to sleep,
Expir'd approving in his elbow chair.

S I R T H O M A S.

May all our exits be as smooth as his.
See, what a blessing 'tis to die in peace;
To leave the world, and feel no secret stings
From a reproving conscience. What is death
To him who meets it with an upright heart?
A quiet haven, where his shatter'd bark
Harbours secure, till the rude storm is past.
Perhaps a passage, overhung with clouds
But at 'tis entrance, a few leagues beyond
Op'ning to kinder skies and milder suns
And seas pacific as the soul that seeks them.

M A R G A R E T.

And what is death, Sir, if the little peace
Of life's tumultuous eve be chas'd away
By recollection of improper deeds
And duties not perform'd. Awful its frown
To him who views it ev'ry day he lives
With growing apprehension.

S I R T H O M A S.

Yes, my child;
Therefore will you and I be honest still
Tho' we die beggars. For no word or deed
Shall our good hearts accuse us. We will live
No man's oppressors but the friends of all,
And do our duty tho' we die in straw.
They come from church. Let's step aside awhile.

Soon

Soon as the aisles are clear'd, we'll enter them.
I wish to see where my good father sleeps. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE *changes to the inside of the Church.* *Re-enter*
SIR THOMAS and MARGARET.

S I R T H O M A S.

See where he lies. The race of life is run
And here he sleeps for ages. Ninety years
Alive and active was the silent corpse
That rests within this grave. How wonderful
That the resulting heart for so long time
Should dance unwearied, and forbear at last
With visible reluctance—that the blood,
Refrain'd by temperance, should up and down
Travel so merrily, and hardly pause
E'en in a cent'ry. Pause it will at last,
And we must all lie down and kiss the dust
As well as this good man who slumbers here.
Simple or noble, indigent or rich,
This is our home. Ay, there thy mother sleeps.
She was the most deserving of her sex
Thy foolish father shed a world of tears
When he there plac'd her. Marg'ret when I die,
As I am sickly in estate and health,
Lay me beside her. I would rest my bones
Under this very spot. Mark it with care.
And when I'm buried let a stone be plac'd
Just here, upon your mother's grave and mine,
That

That here at least we may be undisturb'd ;
 A plain smooth stone without embellishment,
 And not disfigur'd with a vain account
 Of virtues more than mortal e'er possess'd.
 Let it tell truth, and tell it in few words.
 Better to say too little than too much.
 I have a short inscription in my desk ;
 When we go home, I'll search and give it you.
 Why weeps my daughter ? Child, if I am sad
 Let it not grieve you. I have many cares
 You have not heard of.

MARGARET.

Let me know them, Sir.

Trouble is ever lighten'd by complaint.
 Reveal the grief that preys upon your heart
 And it shall half expire.

SIR THOMAS.

Why should I tell it.

'Twill make thee wretched tho' it eases me.

MARGARET.

Not more so than I am, when thus assur'd
 Something afflicts you, and I know not what.
 Perhaps I shall enhance the latent ill,
 And be more wretched while it lies conceal'd
 Than when it is made known.

SIR THOMAS.

Child, I must fall.

I cannot with integrity support
 My ruin'd fortunes. To escape from want

I must

I must be cruel to a virtuous soul,
To a deserted widow without friends
Tho' all-deserving.

MARGARET.

Sooner let us want
Life's necessary blessings, bread to eat,
A house to live in, clothes to cover us,
And beds to sleep on.

SIR THOMAS.

There my daughter spoke.
I will defy the hardest lot of life.
Can'st thou believe it, Marg'ret, that the king
Gave me the noble office which I hold
Only to bribe me, to procure my voice
Against poor Catharine? And shall I give it?
No, tho' it rouse his anger mountain high,
And for my loyalty I lose my head.
There is but one thing that withholds my hand,
Making me cautious how I give offence,
And 'tis indeed a circumstance that grieves me.
'Tis, that our fortunes as so interwoven,
The blow that ruins me will ruin you;
Will sensibly affect my innocent house
And make my children beggars like myself.

MARGARET.

Sir, let it not disturb you.

SIR THOMAS.

I would fall,

God

God knows how willingly, and beg my bread
 Rather than trespass as the king desires.
 But how shall I requite it to my children.
 Dancy depends upon me. My own son
 Has nothing yet to live on ; thou hast little.
 My father could not help us. All he had
 Goes to his widow ere it comes to us.
 My Lady Alice will have no support.
 We shall be scatter'd like the worried flock
 And each must seek for shelter with her own.
 Thou must retire with Roper to his farm.
 Cecilia must with Heron to his father's.
 The little I have left must be bestow'd
 On Lady Alice, Dancy, and Eliza.
 John and myself must starve, or be content
 To earn by labour every meal we eat.

MARGARET.

Dear Sir, you break my heart. Be more compos'd.
 Our little fortunes will be wealth enough.
 Send Dancy to his father's. You and John
 And Lady Alice, come and live with us.
 Or let us hire adjoining houses, small
 And suited to our incomes.

SIR THOMAS.

So we will.

I will not part from my whole happiness.
 Tho' cruel fortune scatter all the rest,
 Marg'ret shall be my hope and comfort still.

MAR-

MARGARET.

We will be modest in our wants, discharge
 All but one servant each, live on plain diet,
 And nicely manage our exhausted means.
 We will shun pleasure and expensive dress,
 And live secluded from the public eye,
 Contented tho' reduc'd. We will not ask
 The neighbour or the stranger to our board,
 But steal away to solitude and books ;
 Pleas'd with the memory of triumphant virtue,
 And poverty preferr'd to vicious wealth.
 If yet our wants are more than we can feed,
 We will be unattended. My own hand
 Shall do the house-wife's work, shall spin and knit,
 And earn by industry sufficient bread.

SIR THOMAS.

My most deserving daughter. Thou wast born
 To teach thy father virtue. I was sad,
 But the sweet patience of thy pious heart
 Revives and gives me comfort. Yes, I'll go,
 And gladly bid farewell to courts and princes.
 Poor we must be, but we will still be just,
 And live upon the hope of better days.
 We will presume the Author of events
 Approves of our endeavours, and perhaps
 Yet ere we come to sorrow and the grave,
 Will bless our patience with an easier lot.
 Come, we will hence contented. For my father,
 Let us esteem him happy that he died.

He

He saw our glory, and withdrew in peace.
 Go to my Lady. Tell her my intent.
 Reveal it to your sisters. Honest girls,
 They will be griev'd to hear how soon we part.
 Tell thy unwelcome story by degrees,
 And mingle comfort with it. I'll to court,
 And when we meet again, meet me with joy,
 Tho' I return as poor as I was born.
 I shall not be long absent. Wolsey's gone.
 His master was his heir before he died,
 And I expect to find him at York-place. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE—the Country between Chelsea and London.

Enter SIR THOMAS MORE, meeting TUNSTALL.

TUNSTALL.

Well met, Sir Thomas, 'tis to you I come.

SIR THOMAS.

I'm glad to see your Lordship look so well.
 Preferment does you good. You were but thin
 When we return'd together from Cambray.

TUNSTALL.

Ay, thin from application, want of rest,
 And unabated travel. Now I pause
 And take my time, no longer yok'd with you,
 A steed of ardent spirit, never tir'd,
 That jaded me to nothing. By your office
 You should improve in looks as well as I.
 Plenty pursues you, yet your brow is sad,
 And your cheek pale.

G

SIR

SIR THOMAS.

Ay, pale as your's was thin,
 From constant application, want of rest,
 And unabated travel. Pack-horse like,
 Still I am plodding on, and find no rest
 To gather flesh like you, worn to the bone
 By everlasting toil. My Lord, fine gowns
 May hide uneasy hearts, and so does mine.

TUNSTALL.

Then let me comfort you. I know your cares,
 I know your wants, Sir Thomas. You are poor.
 Your family is large, and 'tis your wish
 You had in hand to serve them. Hear me then.
 I come deputed from the convocation,
 In name of all the bishops and the clergy,
 To thank you for the pains you have bestow'd
 In writing volumes of so great desert
 In vindication of th' establish'd church.

SIR THOMAS.

My Lord, they do me honour; but their praise
 Was not a fee I wish'd for.

TUNSTALL.

No, Sir Thomas,
 Nor is it all they offer. Well aware
 How much your fortunes have of late been hurt,
 They grant you readily four thousand pounds,
 As a free gift, to recompence your toils.

SIR THOMAS.

My Lord, they shew a spirit which becomes them. -
 It

It makes me happy, that the church I serv'd
 Have prov'd themselves so worthy of defence.
 I beg your Lordship to assure the house
 I'm heartily oblig'd. 'Tis comfort to me
 To have my simple doings so approv'd.
 But for the money they are pleas'd to tender,
 I shall not take a penny.

TUNSTALL.

Surely Sir.

Was it not well-deserv'd? If deeds like these
 Must not be recompenc'd, virtue must starve,
 And worth, in spite of talents, be a beggar.
 Consider coolly. 'Tis but a small gift.
 I was commission'd to make some excuse
 That it so little merited acceptance.

SIR THOMAS.

My Lord, I am determin'd, not a penny.
 What, will you have it said in the wide world,
 The church were so deficient, that they brib'd
 Sir Thomas More, a layman, to write for them?

TUNSTALL.

I cannot think, Sir Thomas, the wide world,
 So well assur'd of your contempt for money,
 Will ever be suspicious that you wrote
 With prospect of reward.

SIR THOMAS.

They never shall.

Therefore I shun your gift, and never hope
 To be one farthing richer by the church.

G 2

TUNSTALL.

TUNSTALL.

Suppose then we proceed on other terms.
Let us bestow it on your family,
Your wife and children.

SIR THOMAS.

Not a doit, my Lord.

Who gives my family enriches me.
If I look on, another shedding blood,
And tacitly approve of what he does,
Falls not the guilt of murder upon me
As much as if myself had push'd the knife?
So then if I refuse a profer'd bribe,
But wink at him who puts it in my purse,
I may be still esteem'd corrupt and venal.
No, Tunstall, they must not accept the gift.
I thank you for your zeal to me and mine.
I love and honour you. Out of your gown
You are a christian friend and honest man.
I know it gave you pleasure, to be sent
With this good news to me. Accept my thanks.
'Tis almost all Sir Thomas has to give you.
Pray let me not detain you. Norfolk comes,
And has perhaps state business for my ear.
Use all your eloquence in convocation,
And tell the clergy I am much their friend.

*(Exit. TUNSTALL.)**(Enter NORFOLK.)*

Your grace, or I'm mistaken, seeks for me.

NORFOLK.

A TRAGEDY.

191

NORFOLK.

Yes, Sir, and bring his majesty's command,
That you this afternoon explain his cause
Before the lower house—that you unfold
Th' opinions of the Universities,
Beyond sea and at home, as much as may be
His marriage furthering, and his just doubts
Approving and commending.

SIR THOMAS.

Ay—indeed?

Intends his majesty beyond all doubt
To marry Bullen?

NORFOLK.

Sir, beyond all doubt.

I've heard it said, the nuptials are already
Consummated in private. This I know,
They live as man and wife.

SIR THOMAS.

Returns your grace

To meet his majesty?

NORFOLK.

This moment, Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

Then, I beseech you, hear my little prayer,
And when you've heard it, bear it to the king.
I grow infirm and sickly, and my mind
Loses its wonted vigour. My request
Is, that his majesty would give me leave
To quit his service ere I misbecome it.

102 SIR THOMAS'S MORE:

It may surprise your grace, I would resign.
Soon as I think you have made known my prayer,
I'll be at the king's feet myself, and yield
The seal in person. Do not ask me why.
My reasons I conceal. I pray your grace,
How does your noble son? Is he abroad,
Or does he ornament his native isle?
I do not think a more accomplish'd man
Lives in the world. He manages the pen
As bravely as the truncheon. With the one
He overthrew the Scot at Flodden field,
And with the other triumphs ev'ry where.
He wins the laurel twice, and should be crown'd
Victor in arms and song. Where is he now?

NORFOLK,

At Florence, Sir, maintaining Geraldine.

SIR THOMAS.

The beauteous servant of our hapless queen.
Pray, Sir commend me to him. If I live
Till he returns, I shall rejoice to see him.

(Exit SIR THOMAS.)

NORFOLK.

So then, the king must lose his chancellor.
I see, More will not serve him under Bullen.
Well, honesty becomes us, but I fear
'Twill make Sir Thomas shorter by the head.

(Exit.)

SCENE

SCENE *changes to* SIR THOMAS'S Library.

Enter MARGARET, ELIZA, and CECILIA.

MARGARET.

Well then, my sisters, we are all agreed,
Our father has done wisely to resign.
It shall not grieve us to be quite reduc'd,
Rather than urge him to the thing he loaths.

ELIZA.

It only grieves me we must be divorc'd
From this our lov'd, and long-remember'd home,
And from each other. We, whose happy days
Have all been spent beneath the same kind roof,
And who, in our whole lives, have scarcely known
A fortnight's separation.

CECILIA.

Ay, my girls,
'Twill make your hearts ach when our husbands come
And tell us they are ready to be gone.
For my own part, I am almost resolv'd
Not to be patient till I see my father
And take a formal leave, but quit his house
Silent and unobserv'd.

ELIZA.

No, no, Cecilia.
'Twill seem as if we wanted just respect
And filial duty. Let us shew esteem
And due attention in the hour of need.
'Tis the best comfort of the humbled mind,

To find, tho' fortune fails it, friends remain.
 No, let us meet with courage the sad hour
 That parts us ever from the roof we love.
 Let us be resolute, and if we can
 Go from our father with unweeping eyes.

MARGARET.

Yes, be content and cheerful. Let no cloud
 Hang on your brows, and no remorseful tear
 Steal from your eyelids. Stifle grief within,
 Nor give it sweet indulgence, till your feet
 Have past the threshold of your father's house.
 'Twill give him ease to find your steady minds
 Repine so little at the sudden change.
 Come, let's assume at least the face of mirth,
 Tho' sorrow preys upon the heart within.
 Our father will return before we think,
 And find us grieving. Let him find us gay.
 'Twas his desire. Eliza, try a song.
 I've often heard you say, when the mind's sad
 'Tis luxury to sing.

ELIZA.

Yes, plaintive airs,
 Dirges, and fun'ral anthems. Serious sounds
 Are the sweet banquet melancholy loves.

CECILIA.

Sing us that little air you made yourself.
 It suits the solemn temper of my mind.
 Begin, and leave the second part to me.

(ELIZA and CECILIA sing.)

(*Just*)

A TRAGEDY. 105

(Just as the song closes enter SIR THOMAS.)

SIR THOMAS.

Thank you, my little friends. To hear you sing
Makes my heart dance with pleasure. Have you told
them

What I requested, Marg'ret ?

MARGARET.

Yes I have Sir.

SIR THOMAS.

Why, then I thank them twice. And would to God
I had substantial blessings for you all.
But we must part, Eliza, we must part.
Cecilia, we must laugh at sev'ral homes ;
We disagree so much, we must be sunder'd,
And measure swords but seldom. I am poor,
And must be thankful to your sister Marg'ret
For my own food and lodging ; nothing now
But plain Sir Thomas in a fustian coat,
With neither robes nor office. Ring the bell.
I wish to see my butler. Here he comes.

(Enter BUTLER.)

Harris, to-morrow I keep house no more.
Your master is grown poor, and can't support you.
Here, take these letters. They are all replies
To applications which I made for you,
And for your fellow-servants. Read them all.
The oldest chuses first, the youngest last.
You must all leave me, but I'm glad to tell you
There are much better places for you all.

BUTLER.

(Enter BUTLER.)

Sir, I have never wish'd a better place.
I will attend you still, or rich or poor,
And be content with nothing.

SIR THOMAS.

My good friend,
If I feed you, I cannot live myself.
No, you must leave me. Go, and go in peace.
You've serv'd me truly. I may serve myself
Before I die. If so, I'll learn from you
To serve with honesty from year to year,
Be satisfied with wages never high,
And quit my master's service with reluctance.
What wouldst thou say?

BUTLER.

Ladies, the horses wait.

SIR THOMAS.

What, must we part so soon? Go, bid them wait.

(Exit BUTLER.)

My daughters, I had hopes we should have din'd
Once more together. But I'll not detain you.
Since we must part, 'tis better to part now.
God blefs you both. Be cheerful and content,
And let not my misfortunes vex your hearts.
I'll come and see you soon—perhaps this month.
Thank God, my limbs are lusty. I can walk
Some distance in a day, tho' I grow old.
John shall attend me, and we'll come on foot,
Staves in our hands, and wallets at our backs,

The

The poor man's equipage. Farewel, my dears.

(*Exeunt ELIZA and CECILIA.*)

Now Marg'ret, let us settle our accounts,
 Dispose of all we have, and leave the house.
 Child, dost thou weep? Let not thy courage fail.
 Mine will soon follow it. Look up and smile.
 Come, we have pass'd the hour I dreaded most.
 My daughters are both gone, and I have brav'd,
 And they have brav'd the pain of separation.
 Where is my Lady? She will not commend
 The deed which makes a beggar of her husband.
 Who comes? Norfolk! What business brings him
 hither.

(*Enter NORFOLK.*)

NORFOLK.

Sir Thomas, I must once more trouble you.
 'Tis the king's pleasure you repair with speed
 To Lambeth palace; there to take the oaths
 Requir'd by the late statute, to maintain
 None but the king supreme, to hold Queen Anne
 Our sov'reign's lawful consort, and her issue
 Heirs of the crown; and the young Lady Mary,
 Daughter of Arthur's widow, Prince of Wales,
 Unlawfully begotten.

SIR THOMAS.

Has an act

Of such a purport pass'd thro' both the houses?

NORFOLK.

It has; and more, Sir, Cath'rine is divorc'd,

The

108 SIR THOMAS MORE :

The king is married, and Queen Anne is crown'd.
I must return in haste, and have but time
To tell Sir Thomas 'tis my warmest hope
He will incline to favour the kings pleasure.
The indignation of a prince is death.

(Exit NORFOLK.)

SIR THOMAS.

Herodias has prevail'd, Herod is pleas'd
And I must be the martyr. Yes, I come.
Marg'ret my child, why are thy looks so sad ?
Smile at the shadowy troubles we have pass'd,
For we have pains to come shall treble these,
And make them hardly worthy of a sigh.
I must be gone to Lambeth. I may go
And never more return. For thy poor father
Has enemies that long to shed his blood
And will prevail. Go to my Lady Alice.
Support and comfort her. Give me one kiss,
And grieve not if we never meet again.
God blefs you.

MARGARET.

Sir let me entreat you, stay.
Stay and let Roper cross the water with you.
Let *me* attend you.

SIR THOMAS.

No, I'll go alone.
Hang not upon me, for I must and will.

(Exit *disordered*.)

MARGARET.

A TRAGEDY.

109

MARGARET. (*at the door*)

He has made fast the door. What, Roper, Roper.
Some accident may happen. Where's the key?
'Tis bolted. Roper, Roper.

(*Enter ROPER.*)

ROPER.

Why d'ye call?

MARGARET.

My father is gone out in great disorder.
I would have follow'd, but he shut the door,
And bolted it.—Pursue him with all speed,
And overtake him. Do not be denied,
But keep him company. He goes to Lambeth.
You'll surely find him at the water side.

(*Exit ROPER hastily and MARGARET after him.*)

SCENE *changes to the Hall of SIR THOMAS's House.*

Re-enter MARGARET followed by LADY MORE.

LADY MORE.

Where are you going thus attir'd? Abroad?

MARGARET.

Madam, not far. I'll presently return.

LADY MORE.

Let me walk with you.

MARGARET.

I must go alone.

'Tis private business, and requires dispatch. (*Exit.*)

LADY MORE.

And I may find companions where I can.

Time

410 SIR THOMAS MORE:

Time was, when he who liv'd within these walls
Could not have mov'd a pace, but he had met
Crowds of gay visitants. Now all is hush'd
And silent as a church. Wit is expir'd,
Laughter is gone, and music is no more.
Too well I see, the poor are never priz'd.
Wealth is the magnet which attracts us all.
And be our virtues brighter than the sun,
Be we possess'd of angel's excellence,
If fortune leaves us not a friend remains. *(Exit.)*

ACT

A TRAGEDY. 441

ACT V.

SCENE—*A Street.*

ROPER *crosses the stage.* MARGARET *follows him.*

MARGARET.

IS it not Roper? Roper. Yes it is.

ROPER.

Who calls me? 'Marg'ret, why came you to Lambeth?

MARGARET.

How can you ask me? Have I not a father?

And is he not this moment wanting aid?

Where is he?

ROPER.

I was coming home to tell you,
And with my tale was cheering. I o'ertook,
And cross'd the water with him to the palace.
We found the clergy waiting, great and small,
To take the oaths. The only layman there
Was poor Sir Thomas. He was first call'd in.
The oaths were giv'n him. He perus'd them both
With

112 SIR THOMAS MORE:

With strict attention, but refus'd to swear.
His reasons he conceal'd, and for his silence
Was shortly after (let it not alarm you)
Sent to the Tower.

MARGARET.
To the Tower?

ROPER.

Yes.

But the worst evil that attends him there,
I trust is short confinement.

MARGARET.
Let me lean
One moment on your shoulder. I am faint.
Your story has surpris'd me.

ROPER.

Gentle heart

Take courage. Try and walk a little on.
The air will give you strength.

MARGARET.

Perhaps it will.

ROPER.

Now rest a little. Do you feel refresh'd?

MARGARET.

Better.

ROPER.

But still you tremble, and your lips
Are paler than your cheek.

MARGARET.

Regard it not.

I am

I am recover'd. I can stand alone.
That sigh has done me good. One moment more
And you may leave me.

ROPER.

What shall I begone
And leave you fainting in the public street?
How can you think I have a heart so hard?

MARGARET.

I must be left. My strength is all return'd,
And I will travel ere I eat or drink
To see my father.

(Exit MARGARET followed by ROPER)

SCENE *changes to a Room in the Tower.*

SIR THOMAS *alone.*

Such is my home—a gloomy tenement,
And solitary as the peasant's hut
Upon the barren mountain. Not a soul
Deigns me a visit. All my company
Are toiling spiders, who consume the day
In spreading nets to catch the harmless fly,
An emblem of myself. For what am I
But a poor, helpless, weather-beaten insect,
That sought for shelter in the lowly shed
And found within the spider tyranny.
Sometimes a mouse attends me for my crumbs.
I bid him welcome, but the whisker'd fool
Is still suspicious that I mean him wrong.
How kind was nature, when she made the brute,

H

To

To make him cautious how he trusted man!
For such a tyrant is he, that he whets
The murd'rous dagger often for himself,
And ever for his brother; sparing none,
His neighbour, or his kinsman, or his friend.
'Tis all his business to destroy himself,
And all his sport to trample on the brute.
Track him in all his ways, in war, in peace,
Seeking renown upon the battle's edge,
Amusement in the closet or the field,
His footsteps are all mark'd with savage bloodshed.
Philosophy and Faith have each their sword
And murder, one for wisdom, one for truth.
The paths of glory are the paths of blood,
And what are heroes and aspiring kings
But butchers? Has not ev'ry prince his knife,
His slaughter-house, and victim? What am I
But a poor lamb selected from the flock,
To be the next that bleeds, where many a lamb,
As innocent and guiltless as myself,
Has bled before me? On this floor perhaps
The persecuted Harry breath'd his last
Under the sword of Gloster. Clarence here
Drank his last draught of Malmsey, and his son,
Poor hapless boy, pin'd infancy away;
All his acquaintance, sorrow and himself;
And all the world he knew, this little room.
Yes, here he sat, and long'd for liberty,
Which never found him; ending his sad youth

Under

Under the tyrant's axe. And here perhaps
Affassination, at the dead of night,
With silent footstep, and extended arm,
Feeling her way to the remember'd bed,
Found the two breathing princes fast asleep,
And did her bloody work without remorse.
O horrible to think of! Such is man.
No beast, whose appetite is ever blood,
Wants mercy more. Shall I escape him? No.
No Marg'ret, no my daughter, no Eliza,
No my good girl, Cecilia. I must die
And leave my widow and my house to mourn.
Sorrow will overtake you, grievous loss,
Plunder, and beggary. Would that my eyes
Might once more see you all before I go.
Ha! what art thou? Have I obtain'd my prayer?
'Tis my dear Marg'ret.

(Enter MARGARET.)

Welcome, my good child.

I bid you welcome with a father's tears.
I know you love me now, for nought but love
Could have prevail'd against the thousand bars
That shut your prison'd father from the world.
How didst thou gain admittance? Hast thou gold?
I left thee poor, and do not think thou hast?
Tell me, was filial tenderness enough,
And did the keeper's iron heart relent
At the good daughter's pray'r?

H 2

MARGARET.

MARGARET.

I bought my way.

But not with money, Sir ; for I have none.
By much entreaty, I obtain'd at last
An order from the secretary Cromwell,
To be admitted to my father's fight.

SIR THOMAS.

Good man, I love him. He seems much concern'd
To see me in such danger. May he live
And be as great an honour to his prince
As, once, his master Wolfey. How does Roper ?
How does my Lady, John, and both your sisters ?
Have you heard from them ?

MARGARET.

Yes, and all are well

As sorrow and continual care permit.
Griev'd all at your imprisonment, yet all
A better fortune hoping.

SIR THOMAS.

Hope it not.

Expect the worst that malice can inflict,
And man can suffer.

MARGARET.

No, we look for days

When our good father shall again be free.
We hope his majesty will yet be pleas'd,
Finding Sir Thomas an obedient subject.

SIR THOMAS.

What ! would ye have me take the oaths ?

MARGARET.

MARGARET.

We would,

And come again to Chelsea and your friends.
 Consider, Sir, how many learned men,
 All wise and conscientious, have complied.
 'Twill hurt your character to stand alone.
 Is it repugnant to the law of God?
 Who can believe it, when the church itself
 With readiness submits. None disobey,
 Of the whole bench, but Fisher. And is't wise
 In you, a layman, to think Fisher right,
 And all the rest deceiv'd? Were it not safer
 To judge that what the parliament allows,
 And the whole church approves, is surely good,
 And must be countenanc'd, and not repuls'd
 With vain reliance on our private thoughts?
 Sir, take the oaths. Escape from calumny.
 The world condemns you for a haughty mind.
 'Tis said that you are rash and obstinate,
 And want consideration.

SIR THOMAS.

Say no more.

Poor Adam! I not wonder that he fell,
 And ate the fatal fruit, his wife requiring.
 My daughter tempts me, and I scarce refrain.
 Urge it no more. I cannot change my mind,
 And, come what will, I am resolv'd to die
 With an unruffled conscience. For my king,
 I love him, and would serve him if I could;

H 3

But

118 SIR THOMAS MORE :

But will not serve him, and offend my God.
For Fisher, think not that I follow him.
The oaths were offer'd me, and were refus'd
Before his mind was known. I shape my faith
By no man's fashion, judging for myself.
Nor care I what the world may think or say.

MARGARET.

Sir, I mean not that you should take the oaths,
Because the servile multitude has sworn ;
I only press you to consider well
Th' example of the good and conscientious.
Is not some def'rence to those great men due,
Who scruple not ? and ought we not to think
Our judgments may be faulty, and their's good ?
If they can swear with safety, so may we.
The law commands it. If we disobey,
We are obnoxious to the public peace.
Better conform, and deem that we are wrong,
Wanting sagacity to see the truth.

SIR THOMAS.

Thou subtle Eve, I charge thee, say no more.
Thou'lt make me angry, as I never was,
With my good daughter Marg'ret. Child, be gone.
Thou art much alter'd. Leave me to myself.
I never wish'd thee absent till to-day.
Ay, now you weep. Well, well, I can forgive.
Be patient with me. I grow old and hasty.
I have been almost dying more than once
Since I came hither. Would that I had died.

There

There is no comfort for me upon earth.
 Swear I will not, nor will tell thee why.
 I do not say, others have done amiss.
 There are in our opinions, as in states,
 Continual revolutions. Man is blind.
 He sees but little, and must often err.
 'Tis prudent to believe we may be wrong,
 But not to alter till we feel convinc'd.
 Mine is a stout opinion; 'twill not yield,
 And, come what will, I must maintain it still.

MARGARET.

Sir, Cromwell bade me tell you, as your friend,
 The parliament still lasts.

SIR THOMAS.

I take the hint,
 And thank him heartily. Yes, it still lasts,
 And ere it rises will a law be made,
 Which shall deprive your father of his life.
 But let not even death disturb thy peace,
 Mine own good daughter. Trouble not thy mind,
 Whatever happens. If I lose my head,
 My life is little shorten'd. I am ill,
 And if I die not by the king to-day,
 Shall die to-morrow in the course of nature.
 Go from me, and be happy. When I'm gone,
 Think that I lov'd thee, but lament me not.
 Yes, I have lov'd you all, but chiefly thee;
 For thou wast ever in thy father's eye,
 Attentively regarding all he said,

H 4

And

120 SIR THOMAS MORE :

And soothing all his pains with sweet concern.
 I blefs thee for it, and, while life remains,
 Will strive to comfort thee. Write to me often.
 I'll answer every letter, tho' depriv'd
 Of pens and ink, and all my books remov'd.
 A coal shall serve me, and I'll write on leaves
 Which chance or charity shall throw before me.
 Haft thou no scraps of paper in thy pocket ?
 O yes, thou haft. I'll put them in my bosom,
 And use them sparingly as gold. Now go ;
 And grieve not that I chid thee ; for distress
 Had sour'd my temper. Bear my truest love
 To both your sisters, and to all my sons.
 Be good to the poor widow for my sake ;
 She will have need. Come, now our farewel kifs.
 Leave me with fortitude, and be assur'd
 In a few years we meet again in heaven. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE *changes to a Room in BONVISE's House.*

Enter BONVISE.

How good a daughter ! Were they all like her,
 Earth would be heav'n, and angels would descend
 To live with men. Her unexampled love
 Remov'd the strongest barriers, won the hearts
 Of her invet'rate foes, and made a way
 Thro' bolts and locks, portcullises and bars,
 Into her father's presence. Such a child
 Who has, is rich indeed. Here comes her husband.

(*Enter*

A TRAGEDY.

121

(Enter ROPER.)

Well, Sir, what news d'ye bring? You seem surpris'd.

R O P E R.

Surpris'd I am indeed. Where is my wife?
Have you not heard the parliament has pass'd,
At the king's instance, a malicious act,
Which makes Sir Thomas guilty of high treason?
His ruin is determin'd. He was charg'd,
In full debate, with studying to sow
And propagate sedition thro' the land,
By his refusal of the proffer'd oaths.
'Twas urg'd, if he was suffer'd to escape,
His great authority would sway the people,
And make them disaffected to their king.
Arch-bishop Cranmer was against the bill,
And told the king in private, 'twas his hope
That More and Fisher might be both excus'd
Swearing, as they had promis'd, the one oath
And not the other. But the angry king
Admits no composition, fully bent
To have the blood of both. The act was pass'd,
And as I came I met the officers
Going to bring Sir Thomas to his trial.

B O N V I S E.

You have astonish'd me. But see—your wife.
Hush for the present. Tell her by degrees
The fortune that awaits her injur'd father.
I'll leave you, and attend upon the trial.
When I return, expect to hear the worst. *(Exit.)*

Enter

Enter MARGARET.

ROPER.

Well, love, how does my father? Will he swear?

MARGARET.

No; he is deafer than the marble rock.

He will not hear me. He is sick and hasty,

And, wouldst thou think it, chid me for my pains.

ROPER.

Chid you, dear heart? Perhaps he did not know

How much and painfully his Marg'ret strove

For that short interview.

MARGARET.

Yes, yes, he did.

I told him something of it, but not all.

I told him also what the world had said,

What Cromwell hinted, and what we advis'd:

And then it was he chid me, bade me leave him,

Said I was strangely alter'd, and declar'd

He wish'd me absent.

ROPER.

'Twas a hard return.

And didst thou leave him angry as he was?

MARGARET.

No; for he saw I griev'd at my repulse,

Accus'd himself for being old and peevish,

Said he was ill, and bade me not regard

The hasty words distress extorted from him.

He comforted and kiss'd me, bade me go

With fatherly affection and concern,

And

And promis'd to write often, tho' the cruel king,
Canst thou believe it, has denied him pens
Paper and ink. He has not suffer'd him
Even a book to read, but there he sits
Alone and ill at ease, feeding his mind
With melancholy thoughts, or with a coal
Writing on scraps of paper and old leaves
Pick'd from the dusty corners of his gaol.
He ask'd me for the refuse of my pocket,
And all the letter cases I could find
I gave him. With a countenance of joy
He put them in his bosom, and seem'd pleas'd
As if he had received a purse of gold.

ROPER.

Poor man, how much he suffers! yet I fear
He has much more to bear with.

MARGARET.

Fear it not.

ROPER.

I partly know it. I have watch'd the storm.
I wish he may escape, but must assure thee
I think he is encompass'd with such danger
'Twill be impossible.

MARGARET.

What hast thou heard?

Tell it me all. He said enough himself
To make me fear designs against his life,
And told me we should meet again in heaven.

ROPER.

R O P E R.

Ay, so I think, but never more on earth.
 The parliament has pass'd a cruel act
 Which makes him guilty of high treason.

M A R G A R E T.

Well,

Go on, and say the king has giv'n assent.

R O P E R.

He has—he urg'd it—and be thou but brave
 I'll tell thee more.

M A R G A R E T.

Ay, tell me all you know.
 I'll hear it all with patience.

R O P E R.

The vex'd king,
 Provok'd by Anne, is thirsty for his blood,
 And is in heart determin'd he shall die.

M A R G A R E T.

Come with me. I will once again implore
 A passage to him, fall upon my knees,
 And earnestly beseech him to obey.

R O P E R.

Love, 'tis too late.

M A R G A R E T.

What, is he dead?

R O P E R.

Dead? No.

M A R G A R E T.

Then I will see him. I will seek again
 The gen'rous secretary, pray his leave

To

To be admitted once more to his fight;
And if his ear is deaf and I speed not,
I'll make my prayer to the king himself.

ROPER.

Stay, stay, I have not told thee all. Attend.
Thy father is this moment on his trial.
I met the officers who went to fetch him.

MARGARET.

Go then and learn his fate. I'll go myself.

ROPER.

Be patient, gentle heart. We shall know all
Too soon. Bonvise is there. The sight of us
May damp his fortitude, and make him faint
Under the labour of defence. Be patient.
Let us prepare to hear the worst we may
And bear it bravely.

MARGARET.

What! shall I stand here
While my poor father struggles at the bar,
Sick with confinement? No, I will be there.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE *changes to a Street.*

Re-enter ROPER and MARGARET.

ROPER.

My love, consider. We have far to walk.
Your strength will fail you. Let us turn again.
You are already heated, and appear
Wild, and distracted. Let us rest awhile.

Bonvise

126 SIR THOMAS MORE:

Bonvise is coming and will tell us all.

(Enter BONVISE.)

Now Sir, how does he?

MARGARET.

Tell me speedily.

Lives he or must he die? Say that he lives.

And yet I know he would not take the oaths.

BONVISE.

Nor has he.

MARGARET.

Then he dies. Come speak the truth.

BONVISE.

Nor let it grieve thy heart. There was no hope.

He is condemn'd.

MARGARET.

And is there no escape?

Is there no mercy, think you, in the king?

He us'd to love him.

BONVISE.

I will not deceive you

I think his execution is determin'd.

MARGARET.

Oh! unrelenting tyrant.

BONVISE.

Softly, softly.

Remember we are speaking in the street,

Where ev'ry door and window has an ear.

Be patient and withdraw. Your father comes,

Returning from his trial to the Tower.

Avoid

Avoid him, for the sudden sight of you
 May ruffle and disturb his constant mind,
 Which seems more placid than the summer sky,
 When not a vapour clouds it.

MARGARET.

No, I will —

I will behold him. Which way is he led?
 I'll once more see him, and obtain his blessing.

BONVISE.

Lo! where he comes, preceded by the axe.
 There is a crowd and officers about him,
 'Twill be impossible to gain access.
 Distress him not. You will be crush'd and hurt,
 Perhaps ill-used and angrily repuls'd.

MARGARET.

Stand by, stand by. I will not move a pace.

(Enter SIR THOMAS guarded, and with a composed countenance. As soon as he sees his daughter, he pauses and looks compassionately upon her. She bursts into tears, makes her way through the crowd, and, throwing her arms about his neck, exclaims.)

My father! O my father!

(The guard interferes. SIR THOMAS speaks.)

Touch her not,

She is my daughter.

(SIR THOMAS sheds tears, and they endeavour to part them.)

SIR THOMAS.

Ay, take me away.

God

128 SIR THOMAS MORE :

God blefs thee, my good child. Come, lead me hence.
My worthy friends, take care of that poor woman.

(Exeunt feveral ways.)

SCENE *changes to a Room in BONVISE's Houfe.*

Enter BONVISE with a Servant.

BONVISE.

A letter from Sir Thomas ! Let me fee.
Ha ! how ! to day ! within the hour ! at nine !
Send Roper hither. This adult'rous king
Is greedy for his blood. I never heard
Of hafte fo unbecoming. 'Tis the fpite
Of Bullen urges him, and go he muft.

(Enter ROPER.)

O Sir, fad news ! Sir Thomas dies to day.

ROPER.

To-day, Sir ?

BONVISE.

Yes to-day. Approach and hear.

I have a letter from him. Come this way.
I'll read it to you, and I'll read it foftly
Left your wife overhear.

ROPER.

Read it aloud.

She's gone by my perfuafion to her chamber.
And Lady More is with her.

BONVISE *(reads.)*

“ Worthy Sir,

“ Sir Thomas Pope has been this morning with me

“ And

A TRAGEDY.

129

" And brings me news that I must die to day—

" Within the hour—at nine."

R O P E R.

Within the hour !

At nine too ! Then he suffers now. Hark, hark.

My ear deceives me, or I hear the chimes.

Listen and count the clock—six—sev'n—eight—nine.

That monster Bullen has obtain'd her wish,

And my poor pining wife will die for grief.

B O N V I S E.

Hush, hush.

R O P E R.

I'll take her instantly away,

She shall not hear her father is no more.

B O N V I S E.

She must, she shall. It is his own request

She may attend him to the grave. Come, come.

Think of some gentle method to reveal it.

Hear the remainder of her father's letter.

" I pray'd my daughter Marg'ret might be present

" At my interment, and my pray'r was heard.

" My wife and children may all follow me,

" And I entreat them not to be o'ercome

" By unavailing sorrow. I am happy.

" Tell my good daughter Marg'ret, I am pleas'd

" To recollect the sweet regard she shew'd me

" At our last interview. We meet again,

" Not many summers hence, where gates and walls

" Shall no more sever us. The handkerchief

I

" I gave

130 SIR THOMAS MORE :

" I gave Sir Thomas Pope is for Cecilia,
 " The picture for Eliza, to be kept
 " As poor memorials of their father's love.
 " My blessing to them all. To thee, my friend,
 " I give my warmest thanks for all thy kindness.
 " Few are the men who feed a duteous child,
 " As thou hast fed and benefited me,
 " Since want o'ertook me, and I came to pine
 " Here in a grated prison. Love my children."
 I will, I will. Marg'ret shall live with me,
 And I will be her father. Ha! who comes?
 Dancy and Heron.

Enter DANCY and HERON.

My good friends, sad news.
 Are you appriz'd that at this very moment
 Sir Thomas may be kneeling at the block?

HERON.

He is in heav'n. We met Sir Thomas Pope,
 Who saw him die. And it reviv'd us much,
 To hear he bore his sentence with a heart
 So patient and heroic. Undisturb'd
 At the grim apparatus of the scaffold,
 He mounted chearfully, and met his end
 With such composure as the peaceful mind
 Brings ever to its duty.

BONVISE.

Still the same
 In life's most arduous hour. I never saw
 A face more cheerful at a wedding feast,

Than

Than his when he appeared upon his trial.
 Yet was he feeble and came slowly forth
 Leaning upon his staff. His cheek was pale,
 And underneath it seem'd to harbour pain
 Not quite conceal'd. He was allow'd a chair,
 And, after he was seated, sigh'd. But these
 Were all the marks he shew'd of discontent,
 Distress or sickness. E'en the dreadful sentence,
 Which fill'd with horror ev'ry face beside,
 Mov'd not the cheerful constancy of his.
 How does Cecilia, Sir?

HERON.

I cannot say.

Well I believe. But her good father's fate
 So much afflicts her that she never speaks,
 And, when I question her of her own health,
 Answers me only with a look of thanks,
 From eyes that ever swim with silent grief.

BONVISE.

And how does poor Eliza?

DANCY.

Sad indeed.

She never ceases to lament and sigh
 By night or day.

HERON.

They will be both in town

This afternoon, to follow to the grave
 Their injur'd father, and condole his loss
 With Marg'ret. Is she well? How does she, Sir?

ROPER.

ROPER.

Approach and see. Soon as your wives arrive,
 She shall have notice of her father's death.
 May she survive it.

BONVISE.

Let it be convey'd
 By distant hints, and our own sad deportment.
 She has a tender heart, and freely grieves
 For sorrows not her own. I hope her sisters
 Intend to seek her at my house.

HERON.

They do, Sir.

BONVISE.

They shall be welcome. With an honest heart
 I lov'd their father, and shall still love them.
 Whatever ills pursue them, bring them hither,
 And here they shall experience a warm friend,
 Happy to serve them in the hour of need.
 Live with me, if you please. I have enough.
 And know not how I could bestow it better,
 Or more to my own pleasure, than to feed
 And keep for life the children of my friend.

(Exeunt omnes.)

F I N I S.

